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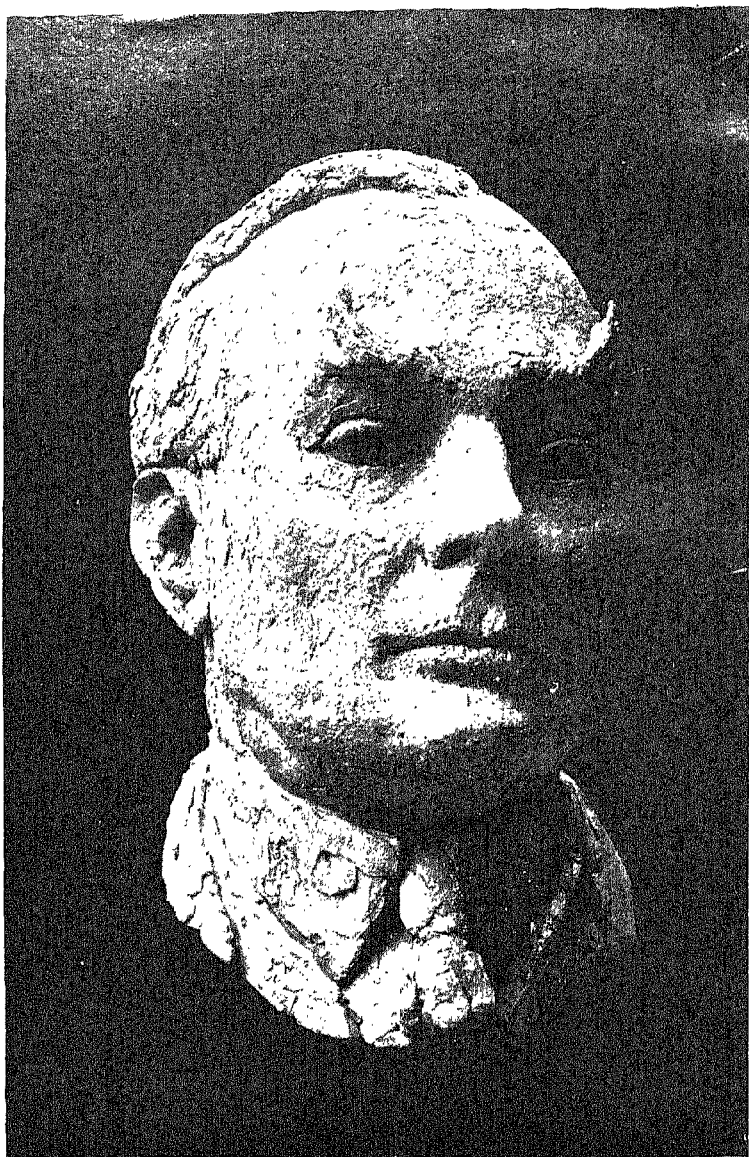


*By the same Author*

—

THE FABLES OF LA FONTAINE  
translated into English Verse





EDWARD MARSH, 1938

*From a bust by Frank Dobson*

# A NUMBER OF PEOPLE

A BOOK OF REMINISCENCES

BY

EDWARD MARSH

LONDON

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## TO THE NOT IMPOSSIBLE READER

I HAVE written this book partly from the traditional motives:

‘Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise’ . . .

‘Obliged by hunger, and request of friends,’

and so on; but chiefly for my own amusement. It is nothing so ambitious as an Autobiography: I have merely used my own life as a convenient row of pegs on which to hang those among my memories which might have a chance of pleasing or interesting other people.

For a long time I believed I had a perfect title, which would tell the reader exactly what to expect: *A Trivial Fond Record*; and it was a heavy blow to learn that I had been forestalled, of course unwittingly, by a former colleague in the Civil Service (to whom I still wish all good). I then thought of several others, none of which would quite do: three or four more from Shakespeare, *A Chronicle of Small Beer*, ditto of *Wasted Time*—but why cry stinking fish? or *Ducdame*, which would be an insult to the public; or *Griffith*, from *Henry VIII*,

‘For such an honest chronicler is Griffith,’  
which would have to be explained. *Here AND There* would have rebutted the cavil that the book was neither here nor there, but been difficult for the printer and the binder. *Occidentations* was a plagiarism from Ronald Storrs; *Very Good Eddie* (a play-title from which I derived much spiritual reinforcement during the weeks when it was on all the omnibuses), too vain; *A Curate’s Egg*, too humble—and the critics would have asked, Which parts? Others, on the lines of *Marsh-Marigolds*, *Elegant Exhalations*, or *That Serbonian*

*Bog*, were ruled out because I was brought up not to make jokes on proper names; and in the last resort I was thankful to find a hint in the *Child's Garden of Verses*.

I will pause no longer on the brink, except to say that I wish I could suppose I had lived up to the precept which Casanova quotes from an unspecified Ancient: 'si tu n'as pas fait des choses dignes d'être écrites, écris au moins des choses dignes d'être lues.'

October, 1938.

## CHAPTER I

### FAMILY HISTORY—MY MOTHER—HOME INFLUENCE

MY Father, Howard Marsh, was the son of a Suffolk farmer. He came to London as a young man to be a medical student at St. Bartholomew's, and he must have had a decided gift, for he worked his way up to a distinguished position, and became Professor of Surgery at Cambridge, ending his life as Master of Downing. He was the most unselfish and good-natured of men, and (except that he did 'marry a noble wife,' though not 'discord in her') Pope's character of his father in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* would fit him in almost every detail. We were the best of friends, but we never had much in common or came very close to one another.

My Mother on the other hand was the all-pervading influence in my early life, and she will be the centre of what I have to tell about it; but first I must say something of her family, and my relations on that side—all very ancient history now.

Her father was Spencer Perceval, eldest son of the Prime Minister of that name who was assassinated in the House of Commons in 1812. He died in 1859, and except that he was the Irvingite Angel to Italy, I know little about him. I am proud to think that he was the begetter of one of the very best quotations that have ever been made in the House of Commons. For the purposes of a debate on the affair of Queen Caroline, Lord Brougham was in search of a device for bringing in George IV without naming him; and Spencer Perceval helped him to the description of Death in the second book of *Paradise Lost*. A shiver ran through the House

when Brougham, with all his power of sinister suggestion, sank his voice to whisper:

‘what seem’d his head  
The likeness of a Kingly Crown had on.’

I am less proud of one or two disconcerting entries in the *Greville Memoirs* for 1836, where he is seen calling on Ministers and Privy Councillors with a minatory Irvingite message from the Almighty in which ‘no definite object was discoverable,’ and being *éconduit* as rapidly as was possible for *un homme de sa qualité*. He complained that he couldn’t catch the Duke of Wellington; but ‘Lady Holland was with great difficulty persuaded to allow Lord Holland to go and receive the Apostles,’ though she took the precaution to ‘order Edgar and Harold, the two pages, to post themselves outside the door, and rush in if they heard Lord Holland scream.’ It seems that my grandfather equipped himself with copies of a book, which he distributed apologetically on his rounds. ‘I am aware,’ he said, ‘it is not well written; the composition is not perfect, but I was not permitted to alter it; I was obliged to write it as I received it.’ (In this he had a later parallel in the Poet Laureate Alfred Austin, who said when grammatical mistakes were pointed out to him in his poems, ‘I dare not alter these things; they come to me from above.’)

A family tradition relates that the Prime Minister’s sister-in-law, Lady Arden, stopped in her carriage outside a shop which I will call Mangold and Wurzel. One of the partners, as was in those days the custom, came out to attend on Her Ladyship; and taking a dislike to his appearance she said: ‘If you’re Mangold, send me Wurzel. If you’re Wurzel, send me Mangold.’ I think it was Lord Arden, anyhow it was one of the Perceval relations, who was famous for having driven all over Europe without once letting his back touch the back of his travelling-carriage; and of course this was always brought up against me when I ‘loll’d.’

## FAMILY HISTORY

My grandmother was Anna MacLeod of MacLeod (1797-1889), whom I remember as a very handsome and very austere old lady living with two unmarried daughters in Lowndes Street. My sister and I were periodically 'taken to see her,' but she was always Olympian and uncommunicative; and I shall never forget the surprise and thrill of reading long afterwards in Sir Walter Scott's *Journal* that he had met 'my favourite Nancy MacLeod' and realizing that this was Grandmamma!

It must have been about that time that she and another girl went for a stroll, each on an arm of a Professor who had been invited to Dunvegan. On the way their cavalier fell into a brown study, and the two minxes, finding him no company, contrived to slip their arms away, leaving behind the 'shawls' which were then the proper equipment for walking-exercise. The Professor finished his promenade with a sense of duty done, quite unconscious that he had been escorting two woollies instead of two young ladies.

On another walk in later life she showed the same resourcefulness. Rain began to fall, and as she hurried homewards along the bank of a river she noticed a lunatic in the act of drowning himself. 'There are times,' thought the Rev. Reuben Butler in *The Heart of Midlothian*, 'when the slightest interference may avert a great calamity—when a word spoken in season may do more for prevention than the eloquence of Tully could do for remedying evil.' 'Hadn't you better wait till it stops raining?' said my grandmother. 'Perhaps I had,' replied the lunatic, resuming his clothes and returning to the Asylum. (As a *pendant* to this, the Dean of Windsor told me how his aunt, Lady Wynford, walking in a lonely place, encountered a madman who advanced upon her and truculently announced that he was King David. 'I see you are,' she answered, sweeping a low Court curtsy; and all was well.)

Our visits to Lowndes Street were always a little awe-inspiring and we by no means had the run of the house, so

that I only got an occasional Pisgah-view of one of the downstairs rooms, which gleamed with fine old leather bindings; but from borrowings which my Mother was sometimes allowed to make for my benefit I had formed the highest notion of its contents, and I was never more astonished and delighted than when I learnt on my grandmother's death that the Library had been left to me—nor more disappointed than when I found that it consisted almost entirely of sermons. One collection of these I kept for the sake of the title, *Adullery, etc.*, which the binder had conferred on it; but of all the other volumes only about fifty meant anything to me, and I sold the rest for £20.

Though my Grandfather is so shadowy, I knew several of his five brothers and six sisters; and when I read in *Peter Plymley's Letters* (where however Sydney Smith was mistaken in making all the children male) of the 'eleven young gentlemen of his own begetting, with their faces washed, and their hair pleasingly combed,' before whom Mr. Perceval walked every Sunday to church at Hampstead, it was startling to perceive that these must be my venerable great-uncles.

My chief recollection is of 'The Aunts,' my great-aunts Louisa and Frederica, who lived together in the Manor House at Ealing. Aunt Louisa was a good-natured old witch, but Aunt Freddie, who was very like the portraits of the Prime Minister, had one of the most angelically sweet countenances I have ever seen. The two had at one time been great believers in the Pretender Naundorff, whom they used to receive with the honours due to the King of France.

The Manor House marched with Elm Grove, originally my grandfather's house, where my Mother had spent most of her girlhood; but in my time it had become the country-house (Ealing was still 'the country' then) of my great-aunt Isabella. She had married her first-cousin, Spencer Walpole, whose political career came to an end in 1867 when as

Home Secretary he burst into tears on learning that the mob had broken down the railings of Hyde Park. He was a magnificently handsome old gentleman with beautiful silver hair, and he must have had a great simplicity and sweetness of character. There are two family anecdotes of him which have always pleased me. One was that when he was in the Cabinet he regularly walked every morning to Covent Garden Market and bought the vegetables, which he carried home under his arm. The other is of an occasion when he dined in his old age with Lord Salisbury, and becoming oblivious of his surroundings said to his wife across the table: 'Isabella my love, would you mind chucking me that piece of bread which I see beside your plate?' Upon which Lord Salisbury, rather unkindly as I have always thought, called the butler and said in a loud voice: 'Bread for Mr. Walpole.'

Like nearly all my maternal relations, Uncle Spencer was exceedingly moral and religious. I once opened my Mother's copy of Byron, and found that a large part of the book had been cut out with scissors. The index showed that the missing pages had contained *Don Juan*, and Mamma explained that Uncle Spencer had told her *Don Juan* was the only book he had ever read which had done him real harm; so she had put herself out of temptation. (This reminds me of an alarming entry in one of my chief early sources of information, Dr. Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, where *La Traviata* was elucidated as 'an Opera by Verdi founded on *La Dame aux Camellias*, by Dumas fils, the most immoral book ever written.'))

My Mother, like her Father, was one of a large family—three brothers and seven sisters: but several of them died early, and only five came at all into my life. The eldest, a third Spencer, had I believe great natural ability, but no spring. He practically lived at the Athenaeum, and I never heard of his putting his talents to any use except in helping



his crony 'Cavendish' to write the famous books on Whist. He was kind to me, but with his bushy black beard and tortoise-shell-rimmed eyeglass I always found him faintly ogreish, and our relations were perfunctory.

The two sisters who lived with my Grandmother in Lowndes Street, and on her periodical visits to Brighton and Mentone, were Aunt Anna, the eldest, and Aunt Helen, the youngest. Aunt Anna was very handsome, and her white hair as good as Uncle Spencer Walpole's. She had decided notions of *quid debeat*, *quid non*: I remember for instance her taking me to task as a little boy for ending a letter 'Your affectionate nephew, Eddie.' I was not, she pointed out, one of the Royal Family, and I should sign my surname too. I think she was always a little doubtful about me, and I was glad when my schoolboy successes seemed to make her think that I might be a credit to the family after all.

Aunt Helen (my Mother called her by the pretty name of Lellie) was the darling of the family. I have never known a being of more exquisite grace and distinction; and by some odd freak of Nature's—for no household could have been more remote from Pre-Raphaelite or 'Passionate Bromptonian' influences—she was exactly like the more spiritual type of Rossetti's women. I never saw that look again till I met, in her old age, Mrs. William Morris herself (and I can never forget the wonder of recognizing that lovely face, come alive from the drawings, with no difference at all except that the smooth ivory skin had a yellowing tinge, and the shapely hair, though just as full and soft and living as ever, was shining-white.) Aunt Helen used to take me with her on her drives in London, and I was seldom more proud and happy than on these excursions, partly from my love and admiration of her, but partly, I am afraid, because of the glory of the barouche (I hope it wasn't a barouche-landau, which would make me *too* like Mrs. Elton) with the grand

coachman and footman on the box—so unlike Papa's little professional one-horse brougham, with its tiny jockey-like coachman Littlechild, who though a great friend was not in the least magnificent.

There was another sister, Aunt Minnie, who lived by herself. Though no one could have been more amiable, she had neither the family looks nor the family brains; and it must have been a great comfort to everybody when late in life she married a retired Indian soldier, Major-General Arthur Stevens, who suited her exactly, and she him. To adapt Stevenson's favourite story about William Godwin and the lady with whom his sister tried to make a match for him, 'Minnie had just about as much religion as her Arthur liked, and Arthur had just about as much religion as his Minnie liked'; and this is saying a great deal. They both grimly believed that Mr. Gladstone was the Personal Devil; but that was nothing in those days, and I was more puzzled by their astonishment at my being allowed to read Dickens. This simply had to be probed; and I found their reason was that it was possible to deduce from the writings of Boz a belief in the perfectibility of human nature without the help of Christianity. I cannot acquit them of 'putting ideas into my head.'

There remains the youngest brother, my Uncle Norman, who if it were necessary for every family to include a black sheep, would have had to be cast for the part. Not that he would have been 'adequate'; but for a Perceval of our branch he was decidedly pagan and pleasure-loving. 'Born with each talent and each art to please,' the masculine counterpart of Aunt Helen's beauty and elegance, he blighted his life by marrying when he was twenty a pretty, silly nobody with whom he had got entangled, I believe in Java or some such place. Aunt Bessie, when I knew her, was a faded, empty-headed, disappointed woman, ladylike rather than a lady; but she was easy-going and affectionate, and I got on with her exceedingly well—better than with most of my

more dignified and high-minded relations, and too well to please my Mother, who shook her head over our friendship and told me, when I was thirteen or fourteen, that it showed I must have an unaccountable vein of frivolity somewhere in my character.

Uncle Norman lived with her in a little house, I should think in West Kensington, and was bored as nearly to extinction as a human being can be without being actually extinguished. He had had to leave the Army, but he spent as much of his time at the Rag as his brother Spencer did at the Athenaeum; and the only occupation I remember him following was the secretaryship of some society for getting people to have their windows cleaned by old soldiers. When my Grandmother died, he became quite well-off, and was able to give Aunt Bessie a separate establishment; but it was too late, and though he launched out a little and had more enjoyment of life, a languor always hung about him. He made new friends, especially in musical society, and it was at his table that I first saw Mark Hambourg, then a Prodigy. I owe to him also my one meeting with the beautiful Mrs. Atherton. But he was always faithful to his life-long ally at the Rag, the most incongruous that could have been imagined: an old salt called Captain Douglas Young, a regular Captain Cuttle of the officer class, who could not be better hit off than he was by his nickname, the Marine Monster. What their friendship was based upon I cannot imagine; but it was very firm and lasting.

The family fortune was mainly derived from the National Grant with which my great-grandfather's dependents were compensated and consoled for his assassination. Some of it came to my Mother on my Grandmother's death, and it is from this source that I have been enabled to add a little jam to the bread-and-butter of a civil servant. Most of the rest eventually accrued to Uncle Norman, and he treated it as a very serious responsibility, making an elaborate will in which the capital was parcelled out among the Prime Minister's





MY MOTHER

*From a photograph by Hollyer*

## MY MOTHER

many descendants in exact proportion to their position in the family-tree. The total turned out to be smaller than he must have supposed, and it is to be feared that some of the more distant cousins came off badly. Mine was one of the larger shares; but there was a further catch: annuities to various ladies were a first charge on the estate, with the result that my heritage came to me mainly in an occasional dollop when one of the fair legatees had passed away. It never seemed quite large enough to be worth investing in those tedious belongings stocks and shares; and I usually blued it on a picture.

## 2

## MY MOTHER

There can be few now living who remember much about my Mother, and I must try to make some kind of record which will not be quite unworthy of what she was. If I touch on ways and beliefs of hers which would be impossible nowadays in a woman of her intelligence, I hope it will not seem inconsistent with feelings of the deepest affection and loyalty.

As the ninth child and seventh daughter, she was unluckily placed in the family. She came too late to be of much consequence as just another girl, and too soon to be whatever is the feminine of a Benjamin. Her parents couldn't be bothered to think of more than one Christian name for her, and that a dull one—Jane, while all the others had two; and though in later life she was culpably indifferent to clothes, she never quite got over the pang she felt when her court gown and train, instead of being cut up as usual into evening dresses for her own wear, were kept to be altered for her younger sister's presentation. Her common sense and independence came out on an early occasion when her Mother

for some childish offence boxed one of her ears, and she (I imagine the little figure in frilled drawers down to her ankles) immediately boxed the other herself, not, as Grandmamma thought, from impertinence or bravado, but from a sense of symmetry—it would be more comfortable to feel the same on both sides.

As I have said, my Grandfather was appointed 'Angel' to spread the Irvingite faith in Italy, and there my Mother spent her childhood from five years old to ten. Fifty years later she took me to Rome, and when we went to St. Peter's she understood why nothing she had ever seen had satisfied her notion of size: the scale of the great Church had imposed itself on her childish mind, and dwarfed everything she had met with since.

I only remember two tiny anecdotes of this time. One was of Lord Lorne, afterwards the great Gladstonian Duke of Argyll, meeting my Aunt Anna dressed up for the Roman Carnival, and asking: 'Are ye all gone clean daft, Miss Pairceval?' The other is almost, probably quite, too silly to tell, except perhaps in the manner of *The Parent's Assistant*. The little girls, attended by their governess on a walk in the country, attracted the favourable notice of some *contadini*, who were engaged in harvesting their oranges, and presented them with quantities of the ripe and delicious fruit. Miss Prune desired to curb their generosity; but her knowledge of the Italian tongue was as yet imperfect, and instead of *Basta! basta!* (Enough! enough!) she said *Bastone! bastone!* (A stick! a stick!). The obliging peasants interpreted her exclamation as a hint that they should belabour a loaded bough with a cudgel; and the children were well-nigh smothered under the rain of golden globes. Thus we see how a premature attempt to speak a foreign language may involve us in the very evils we intend to avert.

On her return to England, my Mother underwent the typical education of the time. She knew Italian very well, and her French, acquired at Monsieur Roche's famous

classes which everybody went to, was perfect. The back-board gave her a grace and dignity of carriage which she kept to the end; and no doubt, like the earlier Miss Bertrams, she was well grounded in 'all the metals, semi-metals and heathen philosophers,' and other branches of elegant accomplishment. The cruel thing was that although she was almost tone-deaf, and in the phrase of the day couldn't tell *God Save the Weasel* from *Pop Goes the Queen*—indeed I actually remember her wondering in church on an anniversary of Her Majesty's Accession 'why they didn't play *God Save the Queen*,' which was at that moment pealing in her ears—she was forced to learn music. All young ladies played the pianoforte: she was a young lady: therefore she must play the pianoforte—the syllogism was perfect. At what cost of hours, of days, of years, I cannot bear to think, she had got into her fingers, by a purely mechanical process, a set of quadrilles founded on some French operetta; and these when I was little she played for me over and over again, I must say to my great delight; so there was that small gain to set against all the labour and the misery—what Virginia Woolf calls 'the timeshed and spiritshed.' Here is a matter in which we have certainly progressed: my sister, who inherited the disability (which I fortunately escaped), was never made to touch a note.

I know almost nothing of my Mother's life at home after her coming-out. She never cared twopence for general society, and she must have divided her own time between reading and the practice of her religion and such good works as came her way. But there is one extraordinary fact to be set down.

In my own view, the want of personal vanity in a woman is a grave defect. But when it reaches the pitch to which it was carried by my Mother in what I am about to relate, and by my sister in an exploit which I shall offer up as a tribute to the power of Heredity, it undoubtedly becomes heroic. The family albums of *carte-de-visite* photographs for the years



of the vogue for crinolines show each one of my aunts, down to the pious Minnie, Anadyomene from the fashionable billows: Mamma appears throughout in a skirt which falls plumb from her waist to the ground. To her mind, crinolines were so nonsensically foolish as to be positively wrong; and she *would not* wear them. To match this resolute indifference to opinion, one must almost go to Haworth Parsonage.

The story about my sister is literally incredible, but I tell it on oath. When she was presented to Queen Victoria, instead of dressing-up and showing herself off to the servants as I suppose every other girl has done since courts began, she took her train out of the box and hooked it on without undoing a single pin; with the result that when she entered the Presence it was unrolled for the first time, and proved to be full of silver paper, which with resource and legerdemain a spry equerry bundled up and spirited away as best he could. And she didn't turn a hair.

I don't know when or how it was that my Mother made the decision which changed everything for her, and became a nurse. I never heard that it had anything to do with Florence Nightingale, though I suppose that without her example it would have been inconceivable; and anyhow it must still have been difficult and unusual for a 'lady' to take such a step. But at some time after Miss Wood had started the Children's Hospital in Great Ormond Street (1852), my Mother left home to work there with her, and in 1867 went on to found, mainly by her own efforts, the Alexandra Hospital for Children with Hip Disease. This continued for many years to be her chief interest outside her home, and all through my childhood we were constantly taken to Queen Square to visit what we called the little Hip-hoppers in the wards, while she went into business matters downstairs.

Under a rather stern outside, she was in all ways the soul of

loving-kindness, and in a spirit how unlike Lady Catherine de Bourgh's 'she loved to be of use': it was always she who was singled out for any *corvée* that might be going. 'Janie, you are the most good-natured person I know,' said Cousin Bella Heathcote, pleading the cause of some helpless girl who couldn't possibly go to Bristol by herself; and of course Mamma left all and took her. But her genius for nursing was something quite beyond and apart from this general serviceability. When I was wretched and restless in bed with some childish ailment, her coming into the room brought with it a balm and diffusion of peace, an indescribable softly-shining glow from within her of easement and healing, which immediately put me to rest in a sense of utter security.

At one of the hospitals she met my Father, who was a *surgeon on the staff, three years younger than she*. They fell in love, and were married in 1870, when she was thirty-five and he thirty-two, at St George's, Bloomsbury (I often think when I pass it of the Scotch peer in Gyp who explained to his French friends why Paris was a sacred city to him: '*C'est là que ma mère a fait la noce*'). They went to lodgings in Guildford Street, where I was born in 1872, a year after my little sister Mary, who died in early childhood. They were poor, and my Mother must have found 'everything very different from what she was accustomed to'; but I remember her telling me, in one of her rare yieldings to that kind of intimacy (though even so with the air of a generalization), that the greatest happiness a woman could have was to go out into the world and face it with the man she loved.

## 3

## HOME INFLUENCE

By the time I began to take notice, I had a little sister eighteen months my junior, and we were living in a tiny

corner house in Bruton Street, No. 36, which has now suffered the fate of so many houses in that charming street, and been turned into a shop. There we stayed till about 1887, when my Father, confident in his advancing prosperity, decided on a move to the much bigger No. 30. But he was a man of such generous nature, so unpushing and ungrasping, that he never made an approach to the income which would have been within the reach of anyone else in his professional position: and the change to a larger way of living filled my Mother's scrupulous mind with an anxiety which was never quite allayed until she came into her share of my Grandmother's money.

However, we are still at little No. 36, and I think a description of our doings there may be of some interest for this reason, that owing to my Mother's age (38) when I was born, her own undeviating turn of mind, and the absence of any strong outside influences to disturb her traditions, my home-education, which my Father left entirely to her, was at least thirty years out of date, and had a *Sandford and Merton* tinge which cannot have survived to affect more than a very few of my coevals. The atmosphere, though far milder, had much more in common with what is described by Edmund Gosse, twenty-four years my senior, in *Father and Son*, than by Maurice Baring, who is practically my contemporary, in *The Puppet Show of Memory*. The account will mainly come under two heads, Books and Religion.

But I have just reminded myself of a droll little incident which I must get in first. When I said my Father took no part in my education, I was forgetting the birthday on which he presented me with Webster's Dictionary, and the disillusion which ensued. Anticipating Oscar Wilde's masterpiece by many years, I had for some reason conceived a passion for the name of Ernest, and bitterly regretted that I hadn't been given it instead of my own 'stupid' one. This feeling was confirmed when on a strange lady asking me in Hyde Park what I was called, and my saying 'guess,' she

looked me all over and suggested *Ernest*. Here was my case proved, and my hankering justified indeed! (By the way, there must have been a measure of solemnity in my appearance, then and later; for when I was only eighteen my sister overheard two Frenchmen discussing me on the ship to Norway, and one of them said: 'Je parie qu'il est précepteur.') Soon after came the day of the Dictionary, and as I turned over the pages I discovered a section dealing with Proper Names. 'Now at last,' I thought, 'I shall find out what Ernest really means'; and sure enough, there it was—'Ernest: éarnest.' 'Ear-nest?' I cried, 'oh misery, that must be the nest that earwigs make in people's ears' (for such, I had been told, was the origin of the word earwig); and from that moment the wish that I had been christened Ernest left me once for all.

My Mother was passionately fond of books, especially of poetry, and this taste she handed on to me, in a degree which was almost morbid: till I went to Cambridge I was nine-tenths bookworm. (To extenuate this, I choose to think that I might have liked people if I had ever seen any. I made of course, several school-friendships, mostly with other bookworms; but our chances of general social intercourse were very small: indeed, but for a few children's parties at Christmas which I never quite got the hang of, I remember nothing but an annual expedition to the Bishop of London (Dr. Jackson)'s garden-party at Fulham. Here were strawberry ices, my great treat of the year; and so narrow was my outlook that I supposed them to be a *spécialité de la maison*, and was surprised when I discovered much later that they were to be met with elsewhere.)

As may be judged from the story of Uncle Spencer Walpole and *Don Juan*, my range of reading had rigid limits; but except for Jules Verne, 'Henty and Ballantyne the brave,' and their like, and (rather oddly) a number of the edifying American stories summed up in *The Water Babies* under the

names of *The Narrow Narrow World*, *Squeaky*, and *The Hills of the Chattermuch*, there was little within them that wasn't of a high order. Shakespeare came first, though I might not read him to myself till at some pains a copy of Dr. Bowdler's edition had been procured. No matter: Mamma was a beautiful reader, and I should never have enjoyed the plays so much unless she had read them to me. The most astonishing thing I ever heard her say, considering her prejudices, was that if she had been a man she would have liked to be an actor; and she would surely have been a good one. I can still see the noble inspired countenance and fiery eye with which she read me the great speeches in *Hamlet*.

Scott came next, and I was carried off my feet by *Marmion* and *The Lay* to the point of hazarding—very tentatively, for I was quite conscious of the hazard—a confession that really I almost thought I thought Scott was nearly as good as Shakespeare. I remember the mixture of tact and disapproval with which this remark was passed over. 'Yes, dear boy, we won't say any more about that,' Bobbie Spencer said to me once at dinner, putting a hand on my knee, when I mentioned the engagement of a lady whom, as I found out afterwards, another of the guests had been hoping to marry. That was the spirit in which my *bêtise* about Shakespeare and Sir Walter was received.

However, I redeemed myself over Milton. *L'Allegro* drove me wild with joy (it is amusing to remember that when I learnt it by heart I was made to begin at 'Haste thee Nymph,' so as to spare my memory the contagion of the not-quite-nice line in the preamble about Zephyr 'filling' Aurora with the buxom Euphrosyne); and I can see now that *Lycidas* insensibly placed itself in my infant mind as the *locus classicus* of English poetry: I mean as the supreme example of what it was when it combined typicalness with perfection. And as for *Paradise Lost!* . . . At those moments which must come to every ageing and old-fashioned reader, when I find myself baffled by what my juniors are admiring, and begin to doubt

whether my feeling for poetry has ever been authentic, I reassure myself by remembering how when my Mother read me the first book I burst into tears, not as might be thought from boredom, but from an overpowering recognition of beauty: at that early age I certainly 'knew the highest when I saw it' And as I learnt the first four books by heart in my twelfth lustre, Milton may be said to have pretty well spanned my bookish life.\*

Then came Tennyson, Keats, Coleridge and Shelley, who was my favourite poet for several years, till Frederic Myers at Cambridge opened my unwilling eyes to the slovenly and turgid passages which are to be found in *Adonais*; and about this time I took great delight in Dr. Mackay's *Thousand and One Gems of Poetry*, from which I learnt by heart Southey's *Cataract of Lodore* for a reward of half a crown (the same as for having a tooth out), offered I expect rather to exercise my memory than because the poem was thought a desirable 'possession for ever.'

Browning dawned on me a good deal later, and became a mania: I remember asking myself if a day of my life would ever pass without my reading at least one of his poems—alas, how many have! Swinburne too: I wonder if anybody gets as drunk on him now as one could in those days. I know I read *The Triumph of Time* at least twice or thrice in such an ecstasy that it never occurred to me to consider what it was about—not that I could say very clearly now. But that is enough of the adventures of my callow soul among these masterpieces: I must get back to my Mother, and on to the novelists.

My French exercise-book contained a tantalizing fragment of dialogue: 'Have you read *Ivanhoe*?' 'No, I never read novels.' 'Ah! but *Ivanhoe* is no ordinary novel.' How my heart panted after this paragon of a book! But there was to be no question of novels, ordinary or not, till I reached a

\* See Appendix to this Chapter.

certain age, nine or ten, I forget which. When the great day arrived, the reading-out of the *Waverleys* began. Bedtime was nine o'clock—how I envied a little boy of my own age who stayed up till half-past!—and from eight to nine was the reading hour. When Sir Walter was exhausted (it would be interesting to know how long he took at an hour a day, but I can't remember) we went on to most of Dickens, and after him to Thackeray. My Mother was every bit as good at prose as she was at poetry. There was nothing to choose between her *Beatrix Esmond* and her *Mrs. Gamp*; and she gave a charm even to David Copperfield's irritating little Dora which to this day prevents me from wanting to throw her out of the window. Unfortunately, Miss Austen was crowded out till in the natural course of events the readings came to an end—I should have loved to hear Mamma in *Miss Bates* and *Lady Catherine*—but she was put into my hands when I was about thirteen, and I fell an instant and permanent victim. This is as good a place as I shall find for saying what I couldn't possibly keep out of a whole book: that she has given me incomparably more pleasure, man and boy, than any other writer whatsoever. Frederic Myers told me he had made up his mind not to re-read her till he was on his death-bed, so as to make quite sure of having a really enjoyable occupation for his last days on earth. I could never have made such a self-denying ordinance—for one thing, there is always the chance of sudden extinction—but if I do have a death-bed I shall certainly read her on it, and find her as fresh as ever.

During all this time my own reading was strictly censored. I don't regret this in the least, because I should never have read such good things if I had been left to myself; and to my mind it is an advantage to grow up with a knowledge and love of the books that are the backbone of one's native literature. But I am surprised and touched, while my reader may be moved to scorn, by the remembrance of my *Casabianca*-like docility; and it is almost pathetic that the only

three books I ever read on the sly were Longfellow's *Spanish Gypsy*, Marion Crawford's *Mr. Isaacs* (these two because I thought they *might* be forbidden), and the desperate Ouida's *Under Two Flags* (which I *knew* to be criminal). The system of embargo worked rather oddly: some books were taken off the index, and others, which seem no worse, kept on. In each series of readings there had been one striking hiatus. We did practically all the Waverleys except *The Heart of Midlothian* (seduction of Effie), and this was let in after Dickens: all the big Dickenses except *David Copperfield* (seduction of Little Em'ly) which was let in after Thackeray: all the big Thackerays except *Vanity Fair*, which remained under the ban. *Jane Eyre* too was barred till my last year at school; so I was cheated of what Andrew Lang thought the ideal time for it: childhood, when the flesh creeps fastest and farthest.

Meanwhile, I suppose from a notion that linguistic advancement cancelled out with moral injury, certain French books were very unfairly handicapped: for instance, I was given several Daudets which would never have been allowed if they had been in English. Not *Sapho* however!—the line had to be drawn somewhere: Daudet inscribed it 'À mes fils quand ils auront vingt ans,' and somebody said it ought to be 'quand ils auront vingt francs'; but I had neither. And when I was promoted to *Monte Cristo*, I found one chapter (*Scène Conjugale* it was called), hedged with inviolable bands of stamp-paper. On the other hand, there was free access to one which was headed *Le Substitut du Procureur du Roi*: rather to my surprise at first, as I knew (dimly) what a procurer was in English, and presumed it was the same in French.

(A modern variation on the censorship theme: my godson Michael Asquith was given Evelyn Waugh's *Decline and Fall* by his mother, and reported to her from Winchester that it had been confiscated by his house-master. She mentioned this, as a joke, in a letter to a member of the Governing Body,



Harold Baker, who jumped to the conclusion that the book was Gibbon, and at once wrote round in a fury to his fellow-governors inveighing against the outrageous clerical obscurantism which debarred a willing boy from acquainting himself with so mighty an English classic. His protest was such a success that the poor master was as nearly as possible sacked before he could get in his explanation.)

When I left Westminster, I thought my emancipation had come. *Vanity Fair* was to be the symbol—and here my Mother was just a little bit hoist with her own petard, for she took me to Norway for those holidays, in order that we might enjoy the beauties of Nature together, and lo and behold, in the cabin of the fjord steamer there was a copy of the now-permitted book, in which I became so absorbed that I would only give an occasional glance to the scenery. But there was to be a final episode. In my first long vacation I bought myself a *Clarissa*, and was well into the third volume when it disappeared. Suspecting nothing, I asked Mamma if she had seen it. Yes, she said, she had taken it away and locked it up: the thought of my turning into a Lovelace was more than she could bear. This led to a discussion, in which I said that considering I was at Trinity half the year with unlimited access to every kind of horror in the Union Library, it seemed hardly worth while to deny me Richardson in the vacations. She immediately and completely accepted the argument, restored the volume, and from that moment entirely changed her policy, reading all sorts of books, down to the boggy Zola, in order to keep up with me; so from then onwards we were as happy together in our common book-loving as we had been at the beginning of all things. But if one experience in my life has been unique, it is surely having *Clarissa* taken away from me when I had been a year at Cambridge.

I was a predestined play-goer: some instinct must have told me so, for long before I was allowed to put my nose

inside a theatre, I knew the names of all the plays and all the chief actors and actresses in London—'Th' imaginary relish was so sweet.' But not counting the pantomime and the playlets performed by the German Reeds with Corney Grain in between (and how these whetted my appetite!) I was never taken to a grown-up theatre till I was fourteen, in the magical year 1887, when I saw first of all *The Mikado*, then in its original run, and soon afterwards, oh joy of joys, *The Merchant of Venice* at the Lyceum with Irving and Ellen Terry. To quote Troilus again: 'Expectation whirled me round'; and when Irving made his entrance as Shylock I well remember saying to myself: 'Even if I die this minute, I *have* seen him.' Even more wonderful, a few months later came *Phèdre*, with Sarah Bernhardt, who was then at her apogee. It must have been the great name of Racine that shepherded me in, despite the subject of the play; for tickets had also been taken for *Frou-frou*, but my Mother took the precaution of reading the text beforehand, and they were sent back.

After this we went to the play, not often, but pretty regularly, especially to Shakespeare, every new Gilbert and Sullivan, and anything French, for which the moral standard was lowered just as it had been for books in that language. I saw practically everything at the Lyceum, plenty of Coquelin, and Sarah seventeen times. (I know the number, because I remember telling a little lady from Rheims whom I met at Heidelberg in a long vacation that I had seen Sarah 'dix-sept fois,' and her cry of envy: 'Ah, c'est pas la peine d'être française.')

But my Mother kept a tight hand on my play-going, and woe betide anyone who took me without telling her first. Papa got into hot water for gallivanting off with me, when we were alone together in London, to see William Terriss in *The Bells of Haslemere*, and Uncle Norman for smuggling me in to a matinée of *The Village Priest* at the Haymarket after giving me luncheon at the Rag. To this day it some-

times comes over me with a shock of strangeness that I have the power of going to any play I choose whenever I like.

No record of my Mother could be of any value which didn't take account of her religion; for to her, as it must be to anyone who genuinely thinks he *knows* about the future life, it was the only thing that counted; or rather, all the other things that counted were part of it—her family affections of course, and all her work for others; but Poetry too, and the beauties and majesties of Art, like those of Nature, were God's work: to love them was to glorify Him: else she would have had nothing to do with them. Her beliefs, both in their character and the intensity of conviction with which she held them, were quite unlike anything that I see around me; and there were things in them which I could not but chafe at when I was under their thrall, and cannot but smile at now; but it is just as impossible not to venerate the iron strength of character which kept her, as I verily believe, from ever departing from their guidance in any single particular. She was conscious of this herself, though of course she wouldn't have put it in that way: it was characteristic of her that in repeating the General Confession she always said 'Thy servants' instead of 'miserable sinners'. She was *not* a miserable sinner, and there would have been falsity in saying that she was.

So far as I know, my Grandfather never converted his wife or any of his children to the Irvingite creed: if he did, the influence died with him, and in my time the family tenets were very Low Church and Scotch. My Mother did not, I think, adhere to any special sect: she was a real Protestant, a Bible Christian of the old school, believing implicitly that the Scriptures were the Word of God, and that she must interpret them by such light as was given her. She was an eager student of Prophecy, and I suspect her favourite Book in the Bible was *Revelation*. Her studies led her to suppose that the End of the World was at hand, and her dearest

ambition for my sister and me was that we might be unsuccessfully persecuted and tortured by Antichrist, and win through to be caught up to Heaven at the Second Coming. Maggie and I used to put our heads together and wonder if we should come up to the scratch.

She gave great importance to church-going. From the earliest possible age my sister and I were taken every Sunday to both morning and afternoon service at St. George's, Hanover Square, and, once we were confirmed, to Holy Communion as well. This I am sure was a mistake. The Communion, which she thought would be to little me, as it was to her, a constant renewal of spiritual strength, became a mere weekly function; and in self-defence against the sermons I developed a technique of sleeping without jerks, which has clung to me disastrously in later life. To this day I can hardly ever listen to the continuous sound of a human voice without dropping-off; and I have often sat in the Official Gallery of the House of Commons, to hear an admired and beloved Chief make a speech of vital consequence to himself or to my country, and been unable to keep awake for more than five minutes at a time. (But perhaps the mephitic atmosphere of that blackish hole had something to do with it.)

Even apart from Church, Sunday was a 'difficult day'. Pious reading took up most of it, especially a bleak periodical called *Sunday at Home*. We heard with envy and curiosity of a little girl who was allowed to draw, though only 'Sunday subjects', which were elucidated as 'Churches and Tombstones'; and our one manual occupation was missionary needlework. I became, so to speak, *parrain* to a little Indian girl at Ahmednagar, whose once familiar name I have forgotten, in spite of all the pennies I saved up for her and all the articles which I manufactured for her use. (Not that I was ever much of a dab with any kind of needle. Later on a Westminster schoolfellow, now Sir Warrington Smyth, who was a powerful influence for good, fired me to knit mittens

for the Deep Sea Fishermen; but my mittens had an inexplicable way of increasing not only in breadth but in length, and became trapeziums of such untoward shape that I had to give them up, and fall back on the fool-proof art of knotting 'comforters' with the help of a little round frame studded with pegs.)

Only once was my notion of my Mother's moral perfection imperilled. We were making a complicated railway journey with third-class tickets; and for one lap of it, involving perhaps two stations, she got into a first-class carriage, making no attempt to pay the extra fare. I was shaken to my foundations: the offence seemed rank, and for five minutes I was faced with the prospect of never being able to speak to her again; but I soon forgot all about it. For Papa I had a less exacting standard; and when he once called a hansom-cabman a fool, my feeling was not disillusionment but relief. 'What a mercy,' I thought, 'he didn't say Raca!' luckily forgetting for the moment that 'Thou fool' is in reality the more compromising expression of the two.

So Time went on, without much development in these matters, till the day of wrath, that dreadful day, when under the spell of a school friend I went Ritualist. No more St. George's, Hanover Square for me! 'What is the use,' asked Alice, 'of a book without pictures or conversations?' 'What is the use,' said I, 'of a church without vestments, incense, or the Eastward Position?' I became a regular attendant at St. Andrew's, Wells Street and St. Alban's, Holborn, where I persuaded myself to admire, though with misgivings, the acrobatic sermons of the celebrated Father Stanton, who seemed momentarily on the point of hurling himself out of the pulpit. (Was it at St. Alban's—if not, it ought to have been—that one of the Tennant children, hearing his first sermon, whispered 'Mummy, is that Jesus?' 'No darling, of course not'—and after a few more minutes, 'Mummy, is he Punch?')

My shocking 'right-hand defection' strengthened my

Mother, if she needed strengthening, in the resolve that I should go to Cambridge, not Oxford. This was very disinterested, as the open Scholarships at Trinity were much less valuable than the close Westminster ones at Christchurch; and my own wishes were all the other way, for the notion of Oxford appealed to me, and all my friends were going there. However, none of these arguments counted against the tradition of the Oxford Movement and the risk of my being confirmed in my High-Churchism. But the unlooked-for upshot was that I hadn't been a term at Trinity before I was caught by the prevailing tide of Agnosticism, and every vestige of dogmatic belief fell away from me, never to return.

There is little to tell of my Mother's later years. The Alexandra Hospital was now able to fish for itself, and its place in her devotion was taken by the Queen's College for Women in Harley Street, of which she became a 'Visitor' and where her help was highly valued. I'm afraid she cannot have been a happy woman, since of her three nearest and dearest none shared her faith; my Father and my sister, though conforming outwardly, were Gallios at heart, and I was no better than a heathen; so she was bound by her beliefs (as she once told me) to think that we should all go straight to Hell. But time, I hope, brought her serenity and tolerance, and a greater trust in God's mercifulness: at any rate, my own relations with her were all affection and, save on the one point, peace.

In her sixty-second year, 1896, she was gravely ill with heart disease, and suffered much pain; but by the autumn she seemed to be mending, and we went for September to a little house in the middle of Richmond Park lent us by my Father's brother-in-law, Uncle Henry Sawyer. There one evening at dinner, four days before her birthday, in the middle of telling us a story that had amused her, she fell forward on the table and was dead.

## A NUMBER OF PEOPLE

A week or two afterwards I learnt that I had passed second in the Civil Service Examination; and I realized that the person in the world who cared most what happened to me was gone for ever.

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER I

'THE cleverest thing I ever did,' said the White Knight, 'was to invent a new pudding during the meat course.' The cleverest thing *I* ever did was a little parody of Milton for the *Week-end Review* (September 1931), which had offered prizes for supplying the 'regrettable omission of any reference to tooth-brushing in the description of Adam and Eve retiring for the night' in Book IV of *Paradise Lost*:

[and eas'd the putting off  
These troublesom disguises which wee wear,]  
Yet pretermitted not the strait Command,  
Eternal, indispensable, to off-cleanse  
From their white elephantin Teeth the stains  
Left by those tastie Pulps that late they chewd  
At supper. First from a salubrious Fount  
Our general Mother, stooping, the pure Lymph  
Insorb'd, which, mingl'd with tart juices prest  
From pungent Herbs, on sprigs of Myrtle smeard,  
(Then were not Brushes) scrub'd gumms more impearl'd  
Than when young *Telephus* with *Lydia* strove  
In mutual bite of Shoulder and ruddy Lip.  
This done (by *Adam* too no less) the pair  
[Straight side by side were laid.]

The mordacious *Telephus* and *Lydia* are 'of course', as the gossip-writers would say, from Horace, Odes, I, xiii. Martin Armstrong, who had set the competition, gave me the first prize, and was good enough to express the hope that future editors of Milton would put my lines in the appropriate place.



## CHAPTER II

### EDUCATION

Miss Scripps's—Westminster—Dr. Rutherford—Trinity—  
Dr. Butler—Sir Richard Jebb—Henry Sidgwick—Ashley  
Bevan—R. D. Archer-Hind—F. W. H. Myers—Mr. Choate  
—The Verralls

WHEN I was eight years old, I started trotting off every morning with a satchel on my back to a day-school in Guildford Street kept by Miss Scripps and Miss Fanny. The elder sister, who was an able woman, dark-haired and purposeful, with a calm and penetrating eye, took the more strenuous subjects, especially Greek and Latin; Miss Fanny, a slightly lackadaisical blonde, taught French quite well, but in other subjects her touch was less certain: for instance, in a Roman History lesson she pronounced the last words of Cæsar, *Et tu, Brute?*, as if they were French. I was a damnably clever child (there is no harm in saying so now), and in the first weekly examination I got full marks for Latin, on which I had barely started with my governess.

I remember very little of the next two years, except a series of lessons on the Ten Commandments, on which I built great hopes of at last discovering what the Seventh was about; but when its turn came Miss Scripps calmly told us that it meant we mustn't over-eat ourselves, which I felt quite sure wasn't the whole truth. And I must take this belated opportunity of stigmatizing our green spelling-book, called *Butter's*, in which a 'List of Words Spelt Differently but Pronounced Alike' hideously included *Engine* and *Indian*.

One term there was a gala performance of the Trial Scene

in *The Merchant of Venice*, in which I was cast for Portia, but to my great chagrin was not allowed to act for fear of the excitement; so there are only two items I recall from the evening: Bassanio, who had had it so drummed into him not to call the Duke the Jook, that he ended by calling Shylock the Dew; and my falling in love with the sister of two school-fellows, little Nora L——, who subsequently presented me, as a love-token, with a stout pair of iron pincers, after which the affair petered out.

## 2

## WESTMINSTER

At the early age of ten I went as a day-boy to Westminster, then ruled by Dr. Scott, whom we little boys wrongly believed to be part-author of the great Dictionary ('Liddell did a little and Scott did a lot'). My Mother wanted me to live at home—at first she used to walk with me every morning across St. James's Park to the farthest point at which there was no danger of her being seen by other arriving boys; and I had to be there by nine o'clock! it is wonderful to think of now, though at the time it seemed a matter of course—so I wasn't allowed to go in for a Scholarship, which involved being a boarder, and had to be content with an Exhibition of £30 a year. (I only knew of one kind of Exhibition, and for a time I honestly wondered whether it could mean that people would pay to see such a clever little boy, and I should get the gate-money.)

There were no very remarkable personalities among the Assistant Masters, till the enchanting and intensely-stimulating J. S. Sargeaunt joined the staff some years later; and perhaps I should add the dour Dr. Heard, afterwards Headmaster of Fettes. One of the others lost his prestige for ever over Cicero's Letters. Whenever Cicero brought in

a Greek word, he would observe that in this connection Greek stood to Latin very much as French does to English, and ask the 'Shell' if they could think of a French word that would do. None of us ever could; and after a pause to search his memory he would come out with some exceedingly suitable and *recherché* equivalent. This made a deep impression, till one of us blew the gaff by getting hold of Jeans's translation and finding all the French words there.

Another Master, known as Pussy, who was in Holy Orders, had the unfortunate but common failing of putting in an *r* between a word ending and a word beginning with a vowel; and Poets' Corner, where each day began with a quarter of an hour's service, used to be all agog on the mornings when it was foreseen that there was a trap for him in a psalm or a lesson—'The Lawr of the Lord is an undefilèd Law' and 'Annar a prophetess' were the favourites; and he never failed us. There cannot be an Old Westminster of my time who if he finds himself intercalating an *r*, as the best of us do now and then, doesn't blench as if he had dropped an *h* at least.

The French Master was an Alsatian, as an economy, because he could teach German as well. This was a pity, as he had a rasping voice and accent, and no sense of anything beyond grammar. I remember it against him that when we were reading *L'Avare* and I got the giggles over Harpagon, he set me an imposition for laughing in class: it was quite beyond his conception that it was either possible or desirable for a schoolboy to find anything amusing in Molière.

The Bursar, Mr. Tyson, I only recall because his name made such a perfect Greek participle. He was *ὁ Τύσων*, his wife *ἡ Τύσουσα*, and the baby, when it came, *τὸ Τύσων*. (And talking of nicknames, there was a boy called Waters a *non lavando*, which we thought very happy.)

Gunion Rutherford had become Headmaster very soon after my entry on the scene. Westminster had been going downhill; but as a little boy of ten I had naturally no general

view of its condition, and it was not till long afterwards that I learnt of the astonishing revolution which he effected in the course of a few months by his energy and strong over-riding will, restoring discipline and 'raising the tone' of the School.

I rushed up through the successive forms, and by the time I was fourteen had got into the Seventh, as the highest was now called by an innovation, or rather a return to tradition, which was one of Dr. Rutherford's minor changes. To be under this great man for four years was an inestimable chance for a budding scholar: one became an impeccable Atticist, and 'properly based *οὐν*', with a vengeance. There was only the one drawback: his zeal for the classics ate him up; with him it was Greek first, Latin a bad second, and the rest nowhere. We did a weekly hour or two apiece at French and Mathematics (at which I was useless anyhow) and there was a little rather perfunctory 'Divinity' on Monday mornings: of Science never a word, nor of English or any modern History—not till Cambridge did I perceive with dismay that I didn't know the difference between the Elder and the Younger Pitt. Even the classics he took perhaps too exclusively on linguistic and literary lines; for Verrall at Trinity, whose own tastes were all that way, was constrained to suggest to me, a little apologetically, that 'perhaps for examination purposes you should give rather more attention to the subjects which I may sum up under the word *Dicasts*.'

But what grand enthusiasm, what a 'fire of soul profuse!' One glorious morning, rather than suffer the interruption of 'putting us on' in turn as usual for twenty lines apiece, he kept me on my legs translating a whole Book of the *Odyssey* (a tiny triumph for me, by the way, as I had only 'prepared' the customary hundred lines or so, and all the rest was 'unseen'; but to travesty the same bit of *Andrea del Sarto*, it was 'my mouth kept spouting by his heart').

In spite of his being an almost exaggerated Scot, he was the only man I have known who was in the least like Dr. Johnson. He had the same zest for learning and letters: no

facial resemblance, for he was of the eagle type, but an equal rugged nobility of countenance; the same sturdy common-sense, and hatred of bad but love of good nonsense: the same aversion to music: something like the same capacity for affection: the same ruthless humour. I can still see a small piteous figure rise at his bidding and stand awaiting the question, with his head on one side and a rueful look, like a moulting canary prepared for the worst. Dr. Rutherford eyed him quizzically for a moment, and commented: 'Ye're a mallancholy creature, Cux!' 'I thought people were *born* knowing the date of the Battle of Leuctra' was another shatterer. And how he led our roars of laughter when a lanky raw-boned youth got up in the Monday 'Divinity' to read his bit of Genesis, and began in a dreary voice: 'Unstable as water thou shalt not excel', making the word rhyme with Dunstable.\* He was fond of rendering, with magnificently open vowels, a sentence from Sir Archibald Alison's *History of Europe*: 'The Austrians held the Po, while the Italians slo-o-owly evacuated.'

I wish I remembered more than I do of his *obiter dicta*; but there is one I have always treasured. Speaking of classical scholarship (but surely the saying is of far wider application), he said that nine-tenths of the Tradition might be rubbish, but the remaining tenth was priceless, and no one who tried to dispense with it could achieve anything at all.

Dr. Rutherford once had a visit from Professor Mahaffy, of Trinity College, Dublin, and asked four or five of the top boys to meet him at dinner, where we were treated to the most extraordinary display of conversational power at which I have ever—assisted is hardly the word, for no one assisted: the Headmaster, it is true, occasionally 'fed' the Professor with a question or so, but we boys sat like 'passive buckets' (I won't say 'silly buckets', for we did appreciate our luck,

\* Since I wrote this, Somerset Maugham has owned that in his early days he made the same mistake. Luckily for him, no Rutherford was by to hear him.

and to sit and listen was the only sensible thing to do), while for at least three hours Mahaffy poured out an unbroken and most entertaining and variegated flow of information, jest and anecdote. Though lighter in hand, it was more like what I imagine a monologue by Macaulay or some other lion of Holland House must have been, than anything else that survived into my generation. Of course I don't remember a word of it.

Another visitor to Headmaster's House I only heard of. Dr. Rutherford learnt that a distinguished German scholar was planning a visit to London, and sent him an invitation to stay in Dean's Yard, with a warning that if as seemed likely his visit coincided with the annual ceremony of 'Elections', when the house would be filled with examiners from Oxford and Cambridge, it might be necessary to put him in the nursery. As it turned out, Elections were over before he came, so he was given an ordinary bedroom; but he didn't realize this, and on being shown his quarters and spying a hip-bath in a corner, he exclaimed: 'Ach! I see—childrenn!' (This was before the days of bathrooms, bathrooms everywhere.)

Two more of his stories come back to me—of the old Lord Midleton, who was about as blind as Old Gobbo. Taking his seat in a railway-carriage, he was hailed by a lady of his acquaintance, and told her he would come and sit beside her. 'But first,' he said, 'let me put this large bundle of rugs in the rack,' proceeding to gather up in his arms what proved to be the governess. Rutherford's form of evening dress was a majestic gown of thick black corded silk, reaching to the ground, with very full pendent sleeves, like one of those silk dresses of our great-grandmothers' which would stand up by themselves. At the end of a dinner-party Lord Midleton came up to him and said: 'I believe, my dear, that our carriage has come.'

I think I may claim that I and J. S. Phillimore, afterwards Professor of Greek at Glasgow (known at School as B. J.,

or Brother John, to distinguish him from Charles, who was B. C.) were Rutherford's favourite pupils. He took the warmest and tenderest interest, and perhaps I may say pride, in our progress, and it was miserable to fail him. Not that B. J. ever did; but I, for some unknown reason, 'went to pot' in my last year but one, and allowed myself to be licked in the summer-term examination by a boy who 'on form' should have had no chance against me. Rutherford's unemphatic but evidently deep disappointment and disgust, combined with my own chagrin, gave me a thoroughly-deserved bad time. Fortunately I pulled myself together next year, and in the final trial of strength B. J. only beat me by one mark.

I mustn't leave Westminster without recording one small distinction which I owed to my precocity. As everybody knows, the boys in the Seventh Form have a traditional right to attend Coronations and Jubilees, and to lead the shout of Vivat Rex or Regina, as the case may be; and as I was only just over fourteen and a half at the date of Queen Victoria's first Jubilee, it seems unlikely that anyone younger than myself, except perhaps a few little Princes and infant peers, was present at the ceremony in the Abbey.

## 3

## TRINITY

Till the War came to confound all epochs, my life divided itself in retrospect into three parts: Before Cambridge: Cambridge: Since. Even though I stayed up nearly five years, to most people's three, the period was short, to bulk so large. But eventful though the time was to me, of the actual events I have very little memory. The other day I was 'talking over old times' with Desmond MacCarthy, and

he brought up incident after incident, of great importance to me but none to him, which I had not only forgotten, but couldn't even recall at his prompting. Perhaps the days were too full and happy for taking mental notes. (One of the most far-reaching things in *Through the Looking-Glass* is the White Queen's remark when Alice picks the King out of the grate. 'The horror of that moment,' says he, 'I shall never forget.' 'You will though,' she replies, 'if you don't make a memorandum of it.')

What I do remember is the personalities that made an impression on me; and I will begin with a few of the Dons.

The Master in my time was Dr. Montagu Butler, who had been at Harrow with my eldest Perceval uncle under his father Dr. Butler I, and had kept up with the family; so he gave me a kind and special welcome. He was a personage of superlative dignity and urbanity, with just a touch of comicality which was very engaging. I remember the unction with which he advised me to 'take deep baths in Homer'; and a suggestion he made at a breakfast-party in the Lodge, that someone should do a book on the Defeats of the British Navy, which would be 'one of the shortest works ever written'. I heard him introduce a lecture on Uganda by Captain Lugard, whom he called Captain Luganda throughout. But most of the stories about him are too familiar: this one may be new. After a meeting in London attended by several Heads of Colleges, some circumstance led him to take a bus to King's Cross, in the far corner of which he presently espied the grumpy old Master of Jesus. The conductor came round for his fare, and on his asking how much it was held up two fingers. 'Master of Jesus, Master of Jesus', Dr. Butler cooed across the bus, 'how shall I interpret this mystic gesture?' 'Master of Trinity, pay your tuppence like a man.'

The Vice-Master was W. Aldis Wright, a dour and



unapproachable old gentleman whom I never knew, and only mention to bring in an anecdote of Edmund Gosse's. The two were walking on a spring Sunday morning down the King's Parade, preceded by a couple of undergraduates with their hands in their pockets and the tails of their gowns slipped through their elbows. 'Do you see that?' said Aldis Wright. 'The undergraduates of the present day suffer from two uncouth and one would have thought incongruous complaints: cold hands, and hot rumps.'

I once heard Lord Jellicoe say that people who saw him in mufti for the first time wondered whether he was a lawyer or a parson. Sir Richard Jebb was like a shy curate trying to live up to a brother in a Cavalry Regiment. His trim and *soigné* person and his neat moustache were as military as could be, but his manner in lecturing, in a very low voice and with sidelong rather furtive glances at his audience, can only be described as mousy. He had, I suppose, no rival in the range and finish of his scholarship, except the much younger and alas god-beloved Walter Headlam; but he lacked Headlam's gift of communicating the sacred fire which was certainly within him.

In my last year I was included in a very choice dinner-party at the Jebbs'. It began with Frederic Myers telling us the social gossip of the next world, about which he had exclusive information: George Eliot, he understood, had lately been seeing a great deal of Wordsworth. After dinner, the company divided itself between two rooms, and Lady Jebb, coming into the one where I was, said: 'Oh, Mr. Marsh, what a pity you weren't in the other room! Lord Acton has been so interesting.' Upon which Lady Kelvin drew herself up and said: 'Mr. Marsh has been very well entertained: he has been talking with Lord Kelvin.' I have never had such a feeling of being in touch with the best of both worlds.

One morning when I was sitting with the Verralls, Henry Sidgwick came in and read us the diploma of a degree which he had just received from some foreign University. '*Magnifico viro Henrico Sidgwick,*' he began, and then in a parenthesis ('they call me m-m-m-m-m-magnificent.') His stammer was the best I have ever known: he seemed always to keep it for the word where it would have most effect. Girton had treated itself to an Observatory, which consisted of two white domes in juxtaposition, one smaller but taller than the other. Dr. Sidgwick's comment at the opening ceremony was: 'It's much more like a w-w-w-white elephant than most w-w-w-w-white elephants.'

It was still told in my time how in his early days as a Scholar of Trinity he read in Chapel the lesson about the Ephraimites. 'And they said unto him: "Say now, Sh—sh—sh—sh—sh—shibboleth,"' and he said "S—s—s—sibboleth."

Ashley Bevan was one of the most delightful 'characters' among the Dons. He was a clear-cut little cameo of a man, compact and natty, with quizzical eyes and mouth and a grey pointed beard like Cardinal Richelieu's. By calling he was an *arabisant*, to use the charming French for our dry 'Arabic scholar'; and indeed everything about him is better said in French: he was *philosophe*, *fin*, *moqueur*, full of *malice*, but *aimable*—a reincarnation of the most elegant and enchanting eighteenth-century Abbé. He took much more trouble about food than most of the Dons, who were rather untraditional in that respect, and he gave us delicious luncheons, after which he would sit cocked-up on the arm of a chair and deal out sharply-pointed anecdotes and digs at the academic world.

Of all his stories of former days at Trinity, when the Fellows were celibate and for life, I only recollect the one of an old boy of eighty who used to go out by night on the grass in Great Court and prod the worms with a pointed stick, muttering: 'You haven't got me yet.' I have never since met

with his dialogue between St. Cecilia and some cherubs who came to hear her play the organ, so I hope it isn't a chestnut.

'Messieurs,' said she, '*donnez-vous la peine de vous asseoir.*'

'Merci, mademoiselle,' they answered, '*mais nous n'avons pas de quoi.*'

And he told of a polished old French verger doing the honours of Strasburg Cathedral, soon after 1870, to a brutal Prussian officer, and showing him a silver mouse, which he explained had been consecrated in the Middle Ages when the town was visited by a plague of mice and had brought about a miraculous deliverance. 'You don't believe that sort of nonsense, do you?' the brutal officer brutally replied. 'No, sir,' said the verger, who might have been Bevan himself; 'if we did, we should already have consecrated a silver Prussian.' He delighted also in the name of a New Englander he had come across, who was descended from a long line of Bible Christians—Preserved Fish.

R. D. Archer-Hind was a great Grecian and a great oddity, padding up and down the lecture-room with his little red Socratic pug-nose in the air and pouring out on the wood-wind of his beautiful voice translations of Plato in an English as exquisite as the Greek. He was said to know all the cricket-averages for years back; and he had a habit of giving half-marks for being able to write Greek Iambics *at all*, which caused great complications to fellow-examiners of lesser leniency.

My other instructor in Greek Philosophy was the noble and beloved Henry Jackson. I wish I could think of anything worth putting down about him, but alas, I only recall his advice, after I had been at it a year, to give it up and confine myself to 'Pure Scholarship' for the second part of my Tripos. I had done my best; but I wasn't surprised at his verdict.

In my later years at Trinity I profited greatly by the

friendship of Frederic Myers and his wife, whose house, Leckhampton by name, was by far the most metropolitan spot in Cambridge, teeming with galaxies from London. Myers was one of the most literary-minded men I have known, and a remarkable linguist: he told me how he had once picked up a book on his hobby, Psychical Research, and read it through without noticing till he came to the end that he didn't know what language it was in (it turned out to be Portuguese). He gave me instruction in the rhythms of Tennyson, especially that of the great address to Virgil which begins:

‘I salute thee, Mantovano, I who loved thee since my days  
began,’

pointing out how Tennyson had avoided the jog-trot which is the pit-fall of the metre by his distribution of the accents. I can still hear him rolling out:

‘Summers of the snakeless meadow, unlaborious earth and  
oarless sea,’

with prodigious stresses on the syllables I have underlined. He took me to task for my undisciplined admiration of Henry James's *Turn of the Screw*, which had just appeared. ‘My dear Marsh,’ he said with severity, ‘do you mean to tell me that you seriously believe in the possibility of the Lesbian vice between the ghost of a governess and a little girl of six?’

One of the visitors who made an impression on me was the American Ambassador Mr. Choate, who came to Leckhampton House just after Sir William Harcourt had brought in the first Death-duties budget. I heard him say that if America had our great country houses she would look upon them as a national glory and use every means to keep them in being; whereas we were doing our best to destroy them.

There were several good stories about him. I was told

that when he was setting-out to present his credentials to Queen Victoria the staff of the Embassy tried to prime him with the correct procedure, but he brushed them aside, saying that he would know quite well how to behave. On entering the Presence, he began with 'How do you do, Queen Victoria?', upon which she burst out laughing and said: 'Do you know, I've never been called that before—though I suppose it *is* my name.' Evelyn Lady Rayleigh (Lord Balfour's sister) told me that on a visit to her at Terling he came down to breakfast and found only two chairs empty, of which the one next his hostess had been kept for him. He sat down in the other, and when she said: 'Oh, Mr. Choate, I hoped you would sit next me,' he answered: 'I understood that in England breakfast was an informal meal, and one could sit where one liked.'

My remaining anecdote is more to the credit of his diplomacy. The scene was a very magnificent ball, at which nearly all the men were in uniform or blazing with decorations. Mr. Choate, in his plain evening clothes, was waiting in the hall for his carriage, when one of the guests came up to him and said: 'Call me a cab.' 'You're a cab,' said Mr. Choate. The other, highly incensed, sought out his host and said that though he hated to complain of a servant, he thought he really ought to tell him how he had been treated. The host was greatly concerned, and made him point out the offender. 'Good God!' he said, 'that's the American Ambassador.' The poor man, with death in his heart, went back to Mr. Choate and abased himself in apologies. 'Oh, my dear fellow,' said His Excellency, 'pray think no more about it. I didn't mind in the least; and indeed, if you had been a little less peremptory, I think I should have called you a hansom cab.'

A group of distinguished old men-of-the-world were discussing in Mrs. Myers's drawing-room the perennial question, who was the most beautiful woman of their time; and after bringing up this name and that they all agreed, as

men of their generation usually did, on Mrs. Langtry. One of them gave an amusing instance of her world-wide celebrity. Queen Victoria had been presented by some potentate with a surpassingly beautiful Egyptian white she-ass. She wrote to Lord Cromer, asking him to suggest a suitable name for the animal, and he replied that after full enquiry he had ascertained that all the most beautiful white she-asses in Cairo were called Mrs. Langtry.

Mrs. Myers's sister, Miss Dorothy Tennant, had married the explorer Sir H. M. Stanley, of whom I have only one recollection. At a party of old Mrs. Tennant's he crossed the room to where I was standing forlorn, and said: 'I see you're looking neglected, so I've come to talk to you.' This well-meant gambit completely froze the genial current of my soul, and neither of us could think of anything further to say.

A. W. Verrall meant far more to me than all the other Dons put together: my small mind jumped well with some parts of his big one, and we had the same *kind* of interest in literature and language. I cannot add to the picture, given in the perfect little Memoir prefixed to his *Collected Literary Essays* by his friend and mine, M. A. Bayfield, of his brilliant intellect and wit, the charm of his company, the beauty of his unselfish and simple character, and his heroic fortitude in the last fifteen years of his life while his body gradually stiffened and froze in the grip of arthritis. I gave Bayfield most of my recollections, but as I should think the book is little known except to a special class of readers, I will reproduce a few of them here, with one or two more.

I once asked Verrall if he had had a nickname at school, and he told me 'only the Great A. W.'; which hits off very well the affectionate admiration everyone felt for him. He had beautiful manners as a teacher, and never made one feel a fool if one wasn't. When he did, it was delightfully done. One evening I dined with him, as a mature second-

year man, to help with three freshers. After dinner we discussed modern novels, and one of the youths contributed his view: 'Well, Dr. Verrall, I must avow that in my opinion Edna Lyall is the first of contemporary novelists.' Verrall was taken aback for a moment, but then: 'Oh well, if you think so, you're quite right to *avow* it, you know . . . *ur* . . . ' (This 'ur' represents what F. M. Cornford calls 'that strange noise, at once a laugh, a crow and a shriek,' with which he would round off a remark he had enjoyed making.) His sense of justice approved the young man's candour, but 'avow'!—the opening was irresistible.

He had the quickest of all minds; of which there was a tiny instance when I told him that our friends the Charlie Sangers had moved to No. 58 Oakley Street, and I was afraid 58 would be a difficult number to remember. 'Not at all,' said Verrall, 'the Septuagint minus the Apostles.' And on a sultry stinking afternoon in Rome, hearing a tourist ask 'Where's the Cloaca Maxima?' he said: 'I should have thought the only natural question in the circumstances would have been, where's the Cloaca Minima? . . . *ur* . . . ' To show how great minds can stoop: Bishop Creighton and he went for a long drive together, and played 'Cat-at-the-Window' all the way, i.e. each kept a look-out on one side of the road, and for every cat he saw at a window scored one point. There was a close finish, Verrall told me, and the excitement was unbearable. In the game of saying what one would be if one had one's choice: 'Of course,' he said, 'I should be a Duke with seventy thousand a year'—(and he a life-long Liberal !)

He once dreamt he was making a railway journey in Asia Minor, and the train stopped at a station which announced itself as Miletus. 'Really?' he thought, 'this isn't in the least my idea of Miletus'; but his doubts were set at rest when he caught sight of a large hoarding with the words **ERIC CYCLE WORKS, LIMITED.**

As a lecturer, I remember him best on the *Choephori* of

Æschylus. He used to sit in a subdued frenzy of impatience, waiting till everyone was there and seated, and if the settling-down went on a moment after he had hoped it was over, there was an agony, shown only by his martyred face, and the drumming of his pencil on the desk. There was never any noise once he had begun, and the high rich shrillness of his voice came streaming out under the closed eyelids in his ivory face. He seemed literally inspired; and my memory has completed the picture with curls of pale blue smoke from a tripod. His commentary was a series of surprises which burst on us like bombshells, and with his mastery of the art of preparation he worked us up into excruciating suspense for the next. When it came I was always startled, and almost always convinced. The excitement was far too great for note-taking, so I used to put a dot under each word that he noticed; and everything was put so perfectly that I scarcely ever found I had forgotten what my dots meant.

It is not an invariable rule that one makes equal friends with a friend's wife or husband; but this was my luck with the Verralls. I have never known a more perfectly-suited couple: she was less whimsical and more practical than he, but they had every taste and interest in common.

Mrs. Verrall was deep in Psychical Research, and she afforded me my one personal contact with the Supernatural. I had written to her describing my doings during a week in Paris, and happened to mention that I had been reading Marmontel's *Mémoires*. This drew on me a fire of eager and mysterious questions, how, when and where? After I had satisfied her, she told me that about a fortnight before I wrote my first letter she had got a communication from whatever agency was trying to give her evidence of another world than ours, about a friend of hers lying in bed at night reading Marmontel in an old leather binding. As she connected Marmontel only with the *Contes Moraux*, and couldn't



conceive what friend of hers would be reading *Bélisaire*, she conveyed to her informant that she hadn't much hope of following up the clue; whereupon he, she or it, urged her to persevere, and to 'try *Fleury* and *Passy*.' Imagine her excitement on hearing that someone *had* been reading Marmontel! As it turned out, there were some slight discrepancies: I had read the book not at night, but on a dark afternoon: not in bed, but on a sofa; and though it had a leather back, it was only the ordinary re-binding of the London Library; but the most striking point was that the scene of what I had thought the best story in it was laid at Passy, with Cardinal Fleury as chief actor. The evidence was strong enough to flatter me with the conviction that I had been prophesied about; but what bearing had it on the questions of

Fixt Fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute?

I give it up, lost in wandering mazes.

The Verralls and I had a special bond in our common adoration of Jane Austen. Once when I was staying up in the Long Vacation, Mrs. Verrall wrote to tell me I must propose myself for a meal whenever I liked, and in my letter of thanks I quoted Sir William Lucas on Lady Catherine's invitation in *Pride and Prejudice*: 'About the Court, such instances of elegant breeding are not uncommon.' She riposted (that verb seems peculiarly appropriate to a reply by return of post) with the other half of his remark, congratulating me on 'that knowledge of what the manners of the great really are, which my situation in life had allowed me to acquire.' When Verrall died in 1912, she gave me his copy of *Mansfield Park*, in which he had made a number of textual suggestions, 'in memory of a long-standing and deep feeling of affection which, I think you know, my husband had for you.'

## CHAPTER III

### UNDERGRADUATES

My Set at Trinity—Bertrand Russell—C. P. Sanger—R. C. Trevelyan—Oswald Sickert—*The Cambridge Observer*—Auguste Bréal—Walter Sickert—G. E. Moore—Desmond MacCarthy—Reginald Balfour—Tripos—Chancellor's Medal

WHAT strikes me most when I look back on the life which I and my companions led at Cambridge is an extraordinary innocence and simplicity. I don't think the 'clear and serene air' in which I see it is an enchantment lent by distance—we really were a different kind from the distraught and turgid beings who people the current novels of adolescence. An earlier generation, racked with religious doubts and abandoning its belief in Jonah's Whale with the agony of losing a limb, had paved us a broad and beaten way to our cheerful and confident Agnosticism; and I don't think any of us were tormented and obsessed with Sex as our successors appear to be—we had no known 'affairs', and I can only remember two of my intimates even falling in love. We were all tingling with intellectual curiosity, arguing on every subject in the firm belief that we should thus arrive at Truth; mostly hard workers, for the sake of the work, with little thought of our 'careers'; keen politicians, nearly all Liberals, aware of the 'storms that raged outside our happy ground' but not much irked by them; great readers in general literature, both English and foreign; respectfully and rather externally interested in the other arts, especially music, but hardly at all in any form of sport. We lived with a high degree of plainness, entertaining one another mainly at breakfast, generally on eggs

which we had personally 'battered'; dining almost every evening 'in Hall', and meeting afterwards for the consumption, not of whisky and soda, but of cocoa—a drink for which I have since lost the taste. Taken altogether, it seems now to have been a very civilized form of life.

Our little group had no marked leader, but I suppose the most notable figure was Bertrand Russell, the only one who has achieved national fame (George Trevelyan and Desmond MacCarthy were later recruits). Russell was chronologically six months to a day, but academically a whole year, my senior, and we became great friends. His 'subject' was Mathematics, of which I had no inkling, but he was already under the charm of Divine Philosophy, which I, though a dull fool at it, found charming for his sake. I wish I could recall the music his lute discoursed on our 'grinds'\* at Cambridge, reading-parties in the Lakes, and a little walking-tour in Wales; but as usual my memory records nothing but trifles, as when in a disquisition on the capacity of mankind for misery he said he had never been so unhappy that he would not have been cheered, in an appreciable measure, by the sudden offer of a chocolate-cream; and it is perhaps of interest that he once told me he had 'an incredibly verbal mind'. He was pleased with the exquisite breeding he had shown as a child when a servant handing a dish round the table left him out, and he decided that his proper course was to state without bias what he saw before him, leaving action to his elders. 'A plate,' he said, 'and nothing on it.' I remember a dark-blue flannel suit ruled with thin white lines, which he felt authorized to wear on semi-formal occasions, because his tailor had told him it would almost do as a blue serge; and as he justly remarked, if it would *almost* do for the tailor, it would *quite* do for anybody else.

He was never above any kind of good joke, and I delighted in his telling of a story about a man who was kept awake,

\* 'Grind' at Cambridge means a walk, at Oxford a steeplechase.

in an old Edinburgh house, by what was obviously a female ghost in the next room, repeating incessantly in a lamentable voice: 'Once I was hup-hup-huppy, but noo I am *meeserable*.' It turned out next morning to be a rusty old meat-jack, which had lost control of itself and gone round and round all night. He gave me also a gem contributed by a maid-servant to the Poet's Corner of his local newspaper:

'How sweet to wander, when all is dark,  
In the Petersham Portion of Richmond Park.'

One of his maxims might have figured in Bernard Shaw's *Handbook for Revolutionaries*. A Reformer, he said, should concentrate on his speciality, and in all else be rigidly conventional: thus, if you were living in sin on principle, you should go to church on Sundays in a top-hat, whereas an upholder of Rational Dress would do well to be conspicuously faithful to the marriage vow.

This is a poor harvest from an intimacy with a great philosopher, but as is well known there is a limit to the capacity of a pint pot. In later years our interests diverged, and I hadn't seen him for a long time when in an evil hour I met him in Whitehall on my way home from the Admiralty one night in September 1914. We began deploring the war, and he said we ought never to have come in. 'Oh well,' I said, 'we couldn't have the Germans over here,' and he answered that he didn't see why not; upon which I left him. I used to wonder later whether he had changed his mind.

Bertrand Russell's great friend was his fellow-mathematician Charles Sanger, who seemed at the time Pollux to his Castor, though later he made less mark in the world, and I think was not much known outside his own department of the Law. He was very short, and had a very round head, seeming in its likeness to a cannon-ball to symbolize the ballistic and shattering quality of his arguments, after the

delivery of which he would stand erect with flashing eyes in the attitude of coping with all comers. He was a very lovable character, with a vein of mischief which came out in his advice to his little sisters, when next their governess asked them what shape the Earth was, to answer that it was an oblate spheroid. The governess, pulling herself together, prudently asked for the source of this information, and on learning that it was brother Charlie, whom she held in awe, told them that of course he was quite right, but it was better for little girls to say that it was the shape of an orange.

My chief intimate in my own year was Robert Trevelyan, of whom there is a perfect portrait, as the young poet Coryat, in Lowes Dickinson's *Modern Symposium*. 'Coryat' might suggest Crudity, but that would be quite the wrong *nuance*—say rather a unique and delightful naïveté. Bob in those days made one think of a charming young woolly bear, all the more charming for not having been too thoroughly licked. The disorderly riches of his mind, which was a junk-shop of wisdom and learning, gushed forth in tentative half-sentences, each apologizing for the one before, running out and retreating like mice in a hole, but sometimes achieving a sudden trenchancy—as in his famous rebuke to Dr. Verrall, who confessed on their first meeting that he had never read *The Revolt of Islam* all through: 'That's sheer indolence of mind.' 'Of course he has a good mental exterior,' was a phrase he used in warning me against someone I hadn't seen through; and certainly his own mental exterior was as untidy as his bodily; but from within there shone the mellow light of an older culture inherited from his brilliant father Sir George, and his great-uncle Lord Macaulay, whose annotations on classical margins he used to show me in the calf-gleaming library at Grosvenor Crescent.

He was already a poet, and if the numbers came with difficulty he would like other poets write down a stop-gap





OSWALD SICKERT

word, to be improved away when he could think of something better. This led to a comical effect when he read out his first drafts, as when he was giving me, in the grand manner, a speech he had put into the mouth of Apollo, and stumbled on what he perceived to be a *cliché*:

‘And for thy sorrows I will give thee—oh well, *balm*.’

In moral qualities I was greatly his inferior. Austerity has never been my strong suit; and on a walking-tour in Switzerland and the Italian Lakes I twice fell sadly below his standard. The first time was when we got out at a Swiss railway station and found a row of children selling bunches of Alpine flowers. When he detected me picking out the prettiest little girl to buy from, he was profoundly shocked by such an unfair and anti-social attitude; and though I argued that we couldn’t very well buy from all the children, and quoted the scripture ‘to him that hath shall be given’, he would not be mollified. A fortnight later we were walking up Monte Motterone on a broiling day, and his scathing contempt for my want of self-control in drinking whenever we came on running water very nearly led to a breach. But though I still think that in his youth his virtue was sometimes ‘dark with excessive bright’, I can’t leave him without recording that it has served him in good stead, and that no man of his time has been a more generous and chivalrous helper of every fellow-artist who has needed a hand.

Oswald Sickert (a younger brother of the great Walter), of the year before mine, was on friendly terms with all my group, but more ‘special’ to me. With his South-German blood, at Cambridge he was a banished prince: the gentlest being I have known, under the suavity of his perfect manners he concealed a shrinking from the ‘young barbarians’, and stood aloof and alien from many who were far from barbarous; but by some blessed accident, between him and me



the barriers fell. To him the arts were a native air, cosy and inescapable, not a region to be journeyed-to and travelled-in from time to time—just as an Italian peasant is more at home in his religion than an English one, cheeking his Heavenly Father and taking his dog to church. Here are two bits of letters, which show the fish first in water and then out of it:

‘Dieppe, August 30, 1895.

‘I often wonder whether you would like this place: on the whole, I think you would, though I know now that the Sickerts can’t expect other people to see in Dieppe all that it means to them. We have inherited the place from Mother who came to school here when she was eleven, and was happy and well for the first time. Father came here too, years before they were married, and afterwards he did his best work here. I feel about Dieppe and the lie of the country in this part of Normandy as people in poems feel about their birth-place; and that amount of sentiment is a good big foundation for the later pleasures which are connected with the place. I suppose I was about seven when I first came, in the spring-time: I stayed with my sister at Mother’s old school, and the girls and I used to make houses with bricks and twigs and carpet them with the petals of peonies. Then a little later the school stopped and we took the house for the summer, and I remember Oscar reading us his poems in the meadow in front of the house, and playing with Leo\* and me. Once when he was reading his poems dear old Miss Sleca, the schoolmistress, “Aunty” we used to call her, interrupted him and said: “No, my dear fellow, not like that: now begin again.” Johnston Forbes-Robertson was with us too, but I can’t recall him. Then another year we had a house on the Route d’Arques, and Nelly and Walter

\* His younger brother, who became a singer.

(the first year of their marriage) had a dear little house, and Walter used to put his pictures out of window to dry them. Then one day Whistler arrived, and he used to be at odd corners, standing upright, immaculate, dainty, doing little water-colours as another man would roll a cigarette; and then Degas came too, and I shall never forget the gentleness and the charm of his personality. That was all very long ago, and I don't feel as if I lived a separate existence then.

'Five years ago I discovered the Casino and first learnt to dance properly, having lessons from the best dancing-master in France (and a most amusing person too), and on the whole I have had more good dances here than anywhere else. It was Leo who made the concerts an exciting affair; we looked for the daily programme eagerly, and discussed the music, and made a speciality of clapping the right people, and sat on the window-sills of the gallery to listen to the adored Rivarde playing the violin. Later on, last year, when Stanley [Makower] was here, we had the best time of all, and on ball-nights Leo would come and laugh with us between the dances; then we sent him on to the café first, and we followed when the dance was over and sat drinking Loewenbräu. That's the Café de Rouen, to the side of the Café des Tribunaux, and it was there that when I was here alone Walter always used to meet me at 12.30 and draw pictures on the little round tables, and catch sight of his famous Madame de Something, driving her pair of spanking greys about at midnight with white kid gloves on. There can never be any other place for me quite like this.'

Then, a week later, poor Cambridge in retrospect:

'Kensington, Sept. 9, 1895.

'The present is not lively. There are fortunately not many things more piteous than leaving a happy sunny

seaside town and coming back to dreariness—though I am in a fair position to hold up, because I can remember the time when the affair was still more desolate, the time when a Cambridge winter term loomed before me, or worse still—a term at school. Now at any rate, though I have nothing particular to look forward to, I can remember the absolute horror of the station, King's Cross or Paddington, which was the next step after coming home: the men with Gladstone bags and rugs, already in pairs, already friendly, talking about the vac, or more horrible still, about the term to come. I can remember the sickening feeling at the sight of these friendly men returning to Cambridge or Clifton contentedly; and it used to be a pleasure to get alone into a carriage among *commis-voyageurs* and market-women with babies, in order to enjoy with painful greed the recollection of a sunny quay with a white house and green persiennes, and a girl with a parasol walking along towards the sea . . . There is one thing I shall never be troubled with again, and that is the continual mass of men, filling up everything till the horizon, cheerful, friendly, and, as I have already explained, with rug-straps and blazers.'

I hope these fragments may give some glimpse of Oswald's nature, at once warm and fastidious, delicate and homely. I should like to commemorate him, how slightly soever, for I suppose he has left no dint on the general memory. Why were his gifts so impracticable? He wrote with infinite pains and utter integrity a novel of literary life called *Helen*, which was published by Fisher Unwin in a 'Pseudonymous' series of little oblong books in yellow paper covers; but nobody read it. Such fire as he had was banked under his 'artistic conscience'; he kept his tone so perfectly that nothing stood out; he was so careful not to say too much that he seemed to be saying nothing at all. If he had been more happily

placed, I believe his qualities would have shed their defects and he would have won through; for he was not lacking in firmness, or even toughness (if 'tough' has kept any meaning except in harness with 'guy'); but 'dire Necessity had driven her nails of adamant into the top of his head,' and this sensitive and exquisite creature spent years of his life as a 'traveller' in the Dominions for the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Yet he had successfully brought off at Trinity an enterprise which called forth the most mundane capabilities: a weekly paper called *The Cambridge Observer*, which ran with credit though not with profit from May 1892 to March 1893, enlightening the University on all the literary and artistic topicalities of the day. It was run at first by a committee of which Oswald was the moving spirit, but about half-way through the editorship was handed over to the brilliant George Warrington Steevens, who died young after making himself a name as a correspondent in the Boer War. I took no part in the management, but I was allowed to spread myself on Irving, Ibsen, and Verlaine, and to do odd jobs of dramatic and musical criticism, in one of which, through the midwifery of the printer, I gave birth to a memorable phrase. Censuring the indiscipline of the orchestra at a symphony concert, I was made to complain that in such and such a movement the first violin had been permitted to yawn 'in the most fragrant manner'.

I also contributed 'Poems', most of them such as to make me hope that I am the only person who has kept his set of the paper; but I still have a soft spot for one or two. There was a sentence in my first Greek exercise-book, 'Parents and poets love their own productions'; and on this plea I will fondly print a sample, inspired as the reader will perceive by my study of the Platonic Ideas:

Your soul is in a starless space,  
The self-illuminated holiest blue.

A NUMBER OF PEOPLE

Apart from even your peerless face,  
Apart from all your earthly grace,  
There dwells the everlasting You.

And sometimes on the rarest nights  
I dimly dream for a point of time  
Of what may be behind the lights  
Of hair and eyes—what God delights  
To gaze on in his own sublime.

To such soaring iambics my fervid bosom led me in my  
sweet youth.

It was Oswald who attracted to Cambridge the exotic and charming figure of the French painter Auguste Bréal, with his bright eyes, his pointed black beard, his *béret*, and his bubbling vivacity. He told us of his arbitrary goings-on at the theatre. If he liked the play and the audience talked, he would say in a loud voice, 'Les bourgeois sont priés de se taire', but if he disapproved of it he would 'wheestle' (*siffler*), and when his neighbours said 'Don't wheestle', he replied, 'But I wahnt to wheestle.' I have a distinct recollection of his telling a story which now seems so strange that I feel I may have dreamt it; so I had better present it as an apologue. It was of Henri Matisse giving a magic-lantern lecture on his own work in some provincial town, and calling special attention to his chef d'oeuvre *La Ronde*, which, he said, although painted with such an appearance of careless ease that it might be taken for an impromptu, was in reality the consummation of more than two hundred studies. Bréal rose to his feet and expressed his wonder that the painter should have made two hundred studies without ever noticing that one of the dancers had five fingers on one hand. Matisse hustled up to the screen in consternation, but there was nothing to be done. There were the five fingers, plain for all to see. By the way, it was this same picture which

gave Roger Fry a grand opportunity for what Humpty-Dumpty called Glory (i.e. 'There's a nice knock-down argument for you'). He was taking Lady Violet Bonham-Carter round the Post-Impressionist Exhibition, in which Cézanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, etc., first blazed upon London, and finally led her up to *La Ronde*, which was hanging in the place of honour on the end wall of the Grafton Gallery. 'What do you think of *that*?' Lady Violet, whose soul was already a little fatigued by its adventures among so many novel masterpieces, gazed upon it in stupefaction, and at last brought out apologetically, 'I don't think I quite like the shape of their legs.' 'Ah!' said Roger in a tone of triumph, 'but don't you like the shape of the spaces *between* their legs?'

Another of Oswald's visitors was his brother Walter, then in the fine dandy flush of his elegant and witty prime, and full of Anecdotes of Painting. I remember a dialogue between a father and daughter who looked over his shoulder when he was sketching on the plage at Dieppe. *Father*: 'Very broad.' *Daughter*: 'What is *broad*, Papa?' *Father*: '*Broad*, my dear, is *rough*.' And the *nouveau riche*, with an ambition to enter artistic society, who was primed to say *Oh la ligne!* when he was shown an Ingres and *Oh la couleur!* when he was shown a Delacroix; and did for himself by saying *Oh la couleur!* before an Ingres. Walter is still, as he then was, an imp. Only two or three years ago he introduced me, at a private view in the Leicester Galleries, to an American couple: 'I want you to know Eddie Marsh—I was madly in love with him when he was a choir-boy.' I didn't know where to look, nor the Americans what to think; but fortunately no harm came of it.

To a brother-artist who showed him a portrait, he said: 'Couldn't you somehow coax that eye into the head?' He told me that when he was teaching he always insisted on a high standard of respect for the senior members of the profession, and that when, for instance, his pupils spoke lightly of James Sant, R.A., celebrated for *The Soul's*

*Awakening*, he came down on them with 'Let me tell you that Mr. Sant's little finger knows more about painting than your whole body ever will.'

George Moore (author of *Principia Ethica*, never, oh never, to be confused with the author of *Esther Waters*) came to Trinity in my third year, and whipped us all up with an egg-whisk. He had the most discovering face I ever saw, with sharp little spectacled acetylene eyes that lit up the lowest bottom of Erebus, and a nose that looked ready to cut platinum. He took absolutely nothing for granted: 'doubt truth to be a liar' was his guiding principle, and I expect he often questioned as many certainties 'before breakfast' as the White Queen believed impossibilities. I once innocently complained of some book that it had no unity. *G. M.*: 'Why should it?' *E. M.*: 'Well, surely a work of art ought to have some kind of unity.' *G. M.*: 'How do you make that out?' I believe I drove him into the position that if a baronet were murdered in the first chapter and the rest of the book were the autobiography of a hippopotamus, all might still be well with it. As a metaphysician, Bertrand Russell staggered under his onset. As a classic, Dr. Verrall said he would construe through a brick wall. Every scholar since the Renaissance might have agreed that a speech in Thucydides was corrupt: if Moore decided to make sense of the manuscript readings, he would. Another mark of his exctastic\* mind was a tendency, as the saying is, to try everything once; as when he drank a tumblerful of whisky neat, to see what would happen; the result being that for a week or so he burnt with a less hard and gemlike flame than usual.

Naturally such a man had a strong influence on the mental and social habits of his contemporaries, and still more of his

\* I have not often been more surprised than when I learnt from the Dictionary that this necessary word, derived from the purest Greek, and signifying simultaneously 'testing' and 'enquiring', was my own invention. I commend it with trembling hope to lexicographers and to the public.

juniors; and there was only one respect in which I thought this was a pity. My set had all been gay and voluble talkers, and not above discussing one another and the rest of the world. I remember someone being asked the difference between an egoist and an egotist, and answering (rightly, according to the Dictionary) that an egoist was a selfish man and an egotist one who talked about himself. 'Then I suppose,' said I, 'that one who talks about other people is an altrutist.' Whether or no this word deserves to pass into the language, we were mostly pronounced altrutists, I among the foremost; but Moore set his face against the practice, and I felt injured when he called me 'anile'. As time went on he extended his principle, and coming to look upon all general conversation as a waste of time, he enjoined on his disciples never to say anything at all unless they felt quite sure that it was both true and important. The consequence was that when I went to Cambridge for a Sunday and breakfasted with the new generation I found a ring of young pearl-oysters in armchairs, pulling at their pipes, their looks commercing with the ceiling, uttering perhaps once in ten minutes. The metropolitan coruscations with which I had hoped to impress them fell perfectly flat; and I couldn't repel the reflection that in our day we had given London visitors a livelier time.

At the beginning of my fourth year, in the autumn of 1894, I came back to go on reading for the Second Part of the Classical Tripos—to a Trinity from which all my friends of my own year and the one before it had departed; so I had to make some more. The three who mattered most were Victor Lytton, of whom 'more hereafter'; Desmond MacCarthy, and Reggie Balfour.

Desmond came up from Eton at an abnormal age, which he gave out as seventeen; but if, as *Who's Who* tells us, he was born in 1878, I don't see how he can have been more than sixteen and at most three-quarters. Be that as it may, he



was already the wise witty mellow easy companion that he is to-day. It was not for nothing that when he edited a review he called it *Life and Letters*, for he is master of both. If I were playing the marking-game, or, alternatively, composing his eulogy on his admission to an Academy, I think I should rate first among his qualities the tolerance and benevolence which he exercises with a consummate sense of proportion and therefore without a moment's derogation from the highest standards. (This may be a Cambridge speciality, for it is the same that Rose Macaulay remarks in E. M. Forster.) Not that his amused benignity is universal; for when presumptuous folly has to be chastised, as in the gentleman who exulted that 'Milton's dislodgement after a predominance of two centuries had been effected in a decade with remarkably little fuss,' he can administer the merited annihilation with all the grace of his Etonian urbanity. (I think there is a touch of Eton in it, though he claims to have been self-educated except for his private school.) He is a scholar without pedantry—perhaps he could do with a little more, for he is capable of the most surprising slips; a vivid and humorous reporter; a shrewd publicist, without bias except in favour of the Good and the Beautiful; a writer of stories whose only fault is that they are too few; and to cut my catalogue short, of all dramatic critics the most constructive. I believe he would have made a first-rate 'producer', for I seldom read a notice of his without wishing that he had been called in to a rehearsal.

The humanity which was the first item in my little celebration is agreeably set-off with a dash of astringent misanthropy, early disclosed when his mother asked him what he would like for his birthday, and he ended his conventional list of a bat, a bicycle, etc., with: 'and please, no little friends to tea.' Again, when he heard that a maiden lady who had known him in his cradle complained of being 'cut to the quick' by his neglect, he answered grimly: '*Let sleeping friends lie.*'

Such revised proverbs often embody as much wisdom as the authorized versions. My own best in this kind, which was provoked by an impulsive beauty who injured a good cause by a well-meant but ill-judged outburst, was: *Where the heart is, let the brain be also*. Another drifted up into my mind as I was unlocking my door at three o'clock in the morning: *A man of pleasure, and acquainted with grief*. (This sounds lugubrious, but it must have been a mere *jeu d'esprit* by my subconscious, for I had genuinely enjoyed the party.) Lady Horner made two very good ones: *Faint praise never won fair lady*, which ought to be pasted-up on first nights in every actress's dressing-room; and '*Waists differ*', which would make a fine slogan for those unfortunate out-size ladies who can't find clothes to fit them, even at Selfridge's. Oscar Wilde is, of course, the master in this art, and of all his new bottles my favourite is: *Punctuality is the thief of time*. And this brings me to one of Desmond's few drawbacks. I myself was born punctual—not that I look on this as one of the sympathetic virtues, any more than an aptitude for spelling, which I also possess. I am sometimes afraid it is the mark of an illiberal and constricted nature; and it certainly means that one is never properly absorbed (*totus*, in Horace's phrase) in what one is doing at the moment. Roger Fry told me he would never be quite convinced he was a good painter till he had at least once forgotten to break off for luncheon. To go back to Oscar Wilde's proverb: there is no end to what I could do, if I had it back, with all the time I have spent waiting for friends whose dispositions were more generous or more concentrative than my own; and for Desmond not the least. When I first went to the Colonial Office as a 'junior', I was allowed exactly an hour for luncheon, from one to two; and I would invite him to my club in Whitehall Gardens. From one to 1.15 my state was placid expectancy; from 1.15 to 1.30, unselfish anxiety; from 1.30 to 1.45, boiling rage; so that when Desmond arrived (if arrive he did) at a quarter to two, I took five

minutes to cool down, and then there were only ten left for food and talk. After a time I gave up asking him; and that was the end of our meeting with any regularity.

(Later in life I had a beautiful object-lesson in behaviour to the unpunctual. The scene was a luncheon-party at the Broughams': the appointed time, 1.30. Till 1.45 we waited for Lady Cunard; and at two o'clock she arrived, full of apologies—she had been buying a chandelier. Old Lord Brougham, a handsome patriarch with magnificent silver hair, looked straight in front of himself and said in a pensive tone: 'I once knew a man who bought a chandelier *after* luncheon.')

I spoke a moment ago of Desmond's *few* drawbacks; but now that I have mentioned them, they crowd upon my soul, as his virtues did when I started his panegyric. On the practical side of life he is sadly to seek: a non-conductor of invitations, a quicksand for borrowed books. Woe to the author who entrusts him with a manuscript of which there is no flimsy. It is one of my standing marvels that he should have kept his head above water as a journalist. One Sunday night, at the beginning of his career, I sat up with him from eve almost to dewy morn, helping him to get into some kind of order the still disjected members of a disquisition on Samuel Butler which he had had six months to write for the *New Quarterly*, and for which the Monday was the last possible day of sending-in. If this is how he keeps time for a quarterly, I thought, what will happen when it's a monthly? or a weekly? Visions of dailies, spare my aching sight! Yet in quarterlies, monthlies and weeklies he has never, so far as I know, defaulted; of dailies I believe he has fought shy—or *vice versa*.

Desmond's future brother-in-law Reggie Balfour (they both married Cornishes) was the last, and one of the dearest, of my Cambridge friends, and although he was a King's man I saw more of him than of anyone else in the two terms of a fifth year which I spent at Trinity reading 'on my own' for

the Civil Service examination. Reggie died early, and is only remembered by those who knew him; but by them always. I apply to him in my mind a couplet from my translation of La Fontaine:

'Some few there be, spoilt darlings of high Heaven,  
To whom the magic grace of charm is given.'

He was one of my three or four Cambridge friends who were religious in the ordinary sense of the word (later on he became a Catholic), and the only one whose religion had any influence on me. Not that he converted me to his beliefs, but he inoculated me for the time being with his devotion to St. Francis of Assisi, and caused me to read a variety of books, from Renan's histories of early Christianity to the *Life of Robertson of Brighton*. He also inspired me with verse in foreign tongues, of which I will produce two specimens, if only to give the impression that I had something to show for all the money that had been spent on my education. Here is the one stanza I remember of a birthday poem I wrote him in French, based on the *Hymn of Creation*:

'Toi que ton œil déclare issu du même père  
Que Saint François d'Assise et la fleur et l'oiseau,  
Sois frais, candide, utile, ainsi que ta sœur l'Eau,  
Sois indomptable et beau comme le Feu ton frère.'

And here is the inscription in a copy I gave him of a delightful anthology called *Echoes*, made by Eleanor Lady Esher, which provided a little piece of music for every day of the year:

Ἦχω, μακρᾶν ἡμῖν ἡχόης χρόνον,  
ὧν ἡδολεσχούμεν τε χάων ξυνήδομεν  
μνήμην φυλάσσουσ', ὥς τ' ἔφθυμεν ἄρθμοι.

(‘Echo, sound long in our ears, keeping in memory how we sang together and talked together, and were born to be friends.’ I promise it is not so flat in the Greek. ‘Sang’ is a poetic licence for ‘played’, as I could never sing a note—not that my playing was up to much either.)

But how does Echo choose what she will keep in memory? Why, when so much else is forgotten, has she preserved the very words of Reggie’s tale about a jealous husband making a scene at an American ‘fete’? ‘Stop ze music, stop ze dance! Take notice! Tompkins is kissing my wife! Vill you fight, Tompkins, or vill you pilligize? Vich vill you do?’ And the *cri du cœur* of his gyp in difficulties with a bottle: ‘The man who invented this corkscrew ought never to invent another!’ In vain we urged that on the contrary the sooner he invented another the better; and the question, which involves a whole philosophy of life, might be argued for ever.

I spoke just now of my education, and I will finish this chapter with a summary of my academic career. At the end of my first year I won a prize by getting a First Class in the Freshmen’s examination, which I only mention for the sake of confessing to a juvenile *fanfaronnade* which was in very bad taste. I chose for my reward three books by Zola! (not, let me say, the real horrors such as *Nana* or *La Terre*, but milder specimens, *Le Rêve*, *L’Œuvre*, and *La Faute de l’Abbé Mouret*). The dons expostulated, but I thought it my duty to give them a lesson in broad-mindedness, and try to Europeanize their outlook; and in the end I won the day. I still possess my three trophies, with the Trinity arms debossed on their green morocco bindings; and I look at them with shame for having been so silly, with amusement because the whole thing was so ridiculous, and lastly with just a grain of complacency, because I have always been a Conformist, and it was the only flash I ever showed of the Rebel Spirit.

I took the first part of the Classical Tripos at the end of

my second year, and disappointed my backers by getting only a 'third division' in the First Class. Two years later, I redeemed myself by taking a First 'with star' in the second part; but my subject, 'Pure Scholarship,' was a new branch of the Tripos, and I have always suspected that the examiners may have been luring others to go in for it. A woodpile in which there was no such nigger was the Senior Chancellor's Medal, which I won earlier in the same year. As a final flourish, I will print a translation of Wordsworth's Westminster Bridge sonnet, which I made on the Latin Verse morning of that examination:

*'Optima certe hodie præbet spectacula tellus.  
Sunt lacrimæ tanti decoris; quis talia visu  
Prætereat stolidus? quæ sit socordia tanta?  
Urbi namque suum rediens aurora leporem  
Induit, innumeræque jacent sine murmure naves,  
Turres, templa, fori spatium vacuique theatri.  
Ultra rura, supra cælum patet; omnia circa  
Nuda sub ætherio late splendore coruscant.  
Non scopulos montesque inter, non vallibus altis  
Major honos primo surgentis lumine solis.  
Talem non oculis vidi, non corde quietem  
Sensi umquam; fluvius lætanti labitur unda,  
Ipsaque, mirandum, tecta en dormire videntur:  
Ipsum, Roma, tuum magna cor pace quiescit.'*

But there was a sequel which I can still hardly think of without syncope. The two Chancellor's Medals and the Porson Prize had all gone to Trinity men, and not one of the three turned up for the ceremony of presentation! What the other two delinquents had to say for themselves I never knew: as for me—it seems incredible, but I hadn't grasped that there *was* a ceremony; I suppose I had expected to get the medal by post. Anyhow, never but once more (on an occasion which will be related in its place) have I felt so

much ashamed of myself as when I received the Master's astonishingly gentle but all the more poignant rebuke:

‘ . . . Do let me ask in all kindness—Is this quite respectful to the University? I know well enough that you would be the last person to wish to be lacking in courtesy and deference to the Vice-Chancellor on a public occasion, but I put it to you whether the presence of the Prizeman is not a natural and appropriate duty?

‘Most truly yours,

‘H. MONTAGU BUTLER.’







MAURICE BARING, *circa* 1895

## CHAPTER IV

MAURICE BARING ET  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{CETERI} \\ \text{CETERÆ} \\ \text{CETERA} \end{array} \right\}$

Maurice Baring—The Expressions—*The Cambridge ABC*—Lady Ponsonby—Delia Spencer—Mrs. Cornish—Heidelberg and Handschuhsheim — Hildesheim — Scoones's — George Grahame—Letters.

I WISH I could remember which day it was, in the first term of my third year at Cambridge (1893), that I met Maurice Baring; for it was certainly one of the crucial and determining days of my life, *alba notandus creta*, fit to be marked with the whitest chalk. I was sitting in my room with one or two others, when Hubert Cornish of King's (son of the celebrated Mrs. Cornish) walked in with a Trinity freshman in tow, new come from Eton. He seemed an unremarkable youth, shy and shambling, with prominent blue eyes, and nothing to say for himself; and he sat on the edge of his chair, only uttering from time to time an abrupt high dry cackling laugh, between a neigh and a crow. I rather wondered why Hubert had wished him on me—but I was bound in civility to 'return his call'; and in two or three days he was one of the most intimate friends I have ever had.

I cannot but believe that at the General Resurrection Maurice Baring, of all men now living, will be the most warmly greeted by the greatest number and variety of his fellow-creatures from every country and continent, and from every walk of life. Russian peasants, German students, old women in China, all the *beaux mondes* of Europe, writers, painters, actors and musicians from all winds, men, women

and children who have known him for a week or for a lifetime, will rise up and embrace him with individual affection. Language was never a bar to him (Russians used to appeal to him on points of their own grammar) and he was boundlessly adaptable, with a queer gift for seizing the *nuances* of any world he was thrown into. For instance, one of the old-maid sisters of the Professor we were staying with at Hildesheim had a birthday, and Maurice gave her *half* a leg of mutton. Few Englishmen would have thought of presenting a lady with mutton at all, and of those few, how many would have understood that a whole leg would be too much, a prodigality, putting the recipient under an excessive obligation? Maurice did, and his gift was a complete success. With the same insight, he advised me of the importance which the French attach to the observance of outward forms even in the most intimate relations of life. A Frenchman, he said, would never begin a letter to a lady with anything warmer than 'Madame', and would write:

'MADAME,—

'Je serai chez vous à minuit.'

He had an extraordinary power of communication. I always enjoy being told all about my friends' friends relations and acquaintances, and Maurice satisfied this appetite like no one before or since. By degrees the whole panorama which he has since displayed in the *Puppet Show of Memory* was unfolded before my eyes: life at Membland in Devonshire, the country seat of his family till the 'Baring Crash', and in the big London house in Charles Street (known as *la rue Charles*) where they were still living, but only on the ground floor; his brothers and sisters, his aunts and uncles, the governesses, the servants; the whole microcosm of Eton, boys and masters; and the best of London Society. There was once an old Frenchwoman who used to settle down to a talk with 'Maintenant, vidons nos sacs d'anecdotes'; and Maurice's *sac* was inexhaustible.

Most of what I remember is already on record in the *Puppet Show*, but for some reason he has left out a delightful story of the beloved governess Chérie, who promised to wake him up and show him a comet which appeared in the sky when he was about eight. Nightly she forgot, nightly the comet waned; and at last she had to break to him that it was gone for ever. Maurice burst into tears, and she told him she would make it up to him with a sight which would mean nothing to him at the time, but which she could assure him he would in the future be more glad to have seen than any comet. This pledge she fulfilled by taking him to hear Ernest Renan lecture in the small Queen's Hall.

Maurice had already an unusual knowledge of poetry and *belles-lettres* (this word always makes me laugh because of Lytton Strachey's answer when I asked him, early in his literary career, what he wrote about in the *Spectator*. '*Belles-lettres*,' he said, with the *belles* high up in the treble and the *lettres* about two octaves below in the bass). I don't think I ever saw Maurice actually reading a book—he would pick one up, peck at it like a thrush at a worm, and soon put it down again; but there must have been some process of 'inward penetration'. He has described the game we used to play continuously for weeks on end when we were together in Germany, one producing a quotation and the other naming the author. I noticed in the long run that while in answering from knowledge we were about equal, when it came to guessing by the style he was considerably the better.

He had at this time a curious and expensive passion for having a favourite poem, or perhaps two or three poems, beautifully printed at the Chiswick Press and bound in morocco. He was not alone in this mania; and here I must digress to relate how when I was staying long afterwards with Dick Wyndham at Clouds I found on the table by my bedside a little book, exquisitely bound in Niger leather, and so thin that there was no room on its millimetre back for a title. I picked it up with a curiosity which was enhanced

when a ticket fell out, bearing the words 'With the Author's Compliments'. It proved to be the Lord's Prayer. 'Some association-copy,' I said to myself in American. Next morning I made enquiries, but no one in the house could account for the phenomenon in any way. The probability is that Dick's grandmother, Mrs. Percy Wyndham, was another libellicule-addict.

Of Maurice's printing operations I now have only one relic—the bill-of-fare of a dinner he gave at Cambridge for the publisher John Lane, with the legend on the fly-leaf: *Of this small-paper edition five copies only have been printed.* They were certainly a waste of money; and he was never one to take care of either pounds or pence. One day I took it on myself to give him a lecture on Economy, and he protested that there were many things he wasn't extravagant about. 'Tell me *one*,' I said, sternly. After some thought he replied: 'You can't say I'm extravagant about underclothes'; and indeed I could not.

*Teacher best*

*Of moral prudence, with delight received . . .*

Talking of lectures, I am one of those who think that in most friendships A is much too squeamish about warning B of his defects, leaving him to learn them too late from his enemies. (There is a proviso to be observed: the correction is more acceptably administered from the level ground of expediency and common sense than from the superior height of principle.) Maurice had a singular gift for pointing out one's failings in the firmest manner, so as to give one a real fright, but without the possibility of offence; and I am eternally grateful to him for pulling me back from the brink of more than one abyss. For instance, I started life with an inordinate desire to please, and a habit of speculating too openly and too anxiously whether or not I had had a success with any new acquaintance. In the Baring language (of which more later) to 'find' is to please, to 'lose' is the oppo-

site: a 'finder' is that which finds, a 'loser' that which loses; and to 'wash' a thing is to get rid of it. Maurice wrote: 'You have got finding and losing on the brain. Wash it—it's a loser.' Nothing could have been more salutary or more efficacious. I saw in a flash what a bore I must have been, and 'washed it'.

Another fault of mine was a tendency to gossip, not (I will say for myself) in malice or in breach of confidence, but from want of grasp on the distinction between what it is wise or unwise to repeat. Maurice gave me several hints, but the storm held off till I passed on something which threatened a triangular mix-up between him and Edmund Gosse and Arthur Benson. Then he told me flatly that if I couldn't stop making mischief he would have to stop seeing me, 'which would be a pity.' I won't say that this cured me finally, but it certainly led to a great improvement.

He was a most amusing companion, with a genius for nonsense in word and deed; and at the grave risk of dis-blooming the plum and dusting the wings of the butterfly, I must make some attempt to give a notion of his humour, which was the most ridiculous thing in the world. One of his audacities was to ask for some stamps at the post-office in Florence. When they were given him, he sniffed them with an air of suspicion. '*Sono freschi?*' he asked. 'Are they fresh? They must be very fresh, they are for an invalid.' Long afterwards, when someone mentioned as an inexplicable fact that since plovers' eggs had been protected by statute, fewer had been laid than before, 'Naturally,' said Maurice, in a tone of rebutting an unreasonable criticism, 'the plovers won't take the trouble to lay eggs if nobody's going to eat them.' He had a good way of spelling his name on the telephone. 'B for Beastly, A for Apple, R for Rotten, I for England, N for Nothing, G for God'—all rattled off at top-speed. Taking possession of an empty railway-carriage, he said: 'Let's shut the door, so as to make it more difficult to get in.'

When I told him what joy I had taken throughout my school-days in the Saturday and Monday Pops (the then-famous concerts of Chamber-music, at which Joachim and Madame Schumann and all the greatest players were to be heard), he said what nonsense I talked. 'A wretchedly small orchestra—only about four instruments—and they even let women play! However there's this to be said for them, they do keep people out of the public-house.' Every now and then he would burst into a snatch of song, such as:

'Lord Salisbury's my only friend.  
Oh come *into* the mountains,  
Oh come *into* the mountains.'

Sometimes his jokes were quite sadistic. Lunching one day at the Café Royal, he presented me with the most delicious-looking sweet I had ever seen, a golden globule, a compromise between an entire and perfect chrysolite and the Platonic Idea of the Giant Gooseberry. I bit into it eagerly, and my features went off in all directions—the seeming bon-bon was a quintessence of quinine. 'Oh, Maurice,' I said, 'it's agony;' to which he answered grimly, 'It's nothing to what it will be a week from now.'

He was a good mimic, in a rather curious way. The voices he gave his puppets were not, superficially, very like; but they had an essential truth which grew upon one more and more. I had a good instance of this when he took me one Sunday to hear the Headmaster of Eton, Dr. Warre, preach in Lower Chapel. (He had brought me up on Dr. Warre—'The name of the generous donor is known only to myself—to God—and to a few others,' and so on.) At first I was dreadfully disappointed. This was not Maurice's Dr. Warre at all. But moment by moment I realized how wrong I was—the whole rhythm of the man was in the travesty; and by the time he began his peroration: 'And you boys—whatever you may be in after life—*whether* you may be great statesmen—or *whether* you may be great lawyers—or *whether* you

may be great writers—or even if you're *only engineers* . . . ' we were both so shaking with stifled laughter that I felt the very pew we sat in was rising-up to shame us.

In a game of Dialogues, in which Maurice was to impersonate 'Vernon Lee,' and one of the Cornish girls an Eton Dame, Miss Copeman by name, he improvised what I have always thought a far-reaching critical remark. Charlotte Cornish began with a suitable shy modesty: 'Would you tell me, Miss Paget, which is the best edition of Dante?' Without a second's hesitation Maurice rolled out in a round thick-warbling richly-modulated voice: '*All* editions of Dante are *unsatisfactory*, inasmuch as they present us with the *complete* works of the poet.' I must break my thread here to string an appropriate pearl from a possibly forgotten essay of Max Beerbohm's in the old *Saturday*: 'the exquisitely-finished little poems which Sappho, with feminine tact, passed off on posterity as the fragments of her complete works;' and I am reminded also of an observation I heard from Vernon Lee's own brother, Eugene Lee-Hamilton, the only time I met him: 'I always find that in reading the very *greatest* poets one has to keep one's standard *extremely* low.'

Maurice could be very provoking to foreigners. He was once shown over the Invalides by a guide, whom he exasperated beyond endurance by questioning all his statements. At last they came to an Arabic inscription, before which the guide, in confident anticipation of getting his own back, said mordantly: 'Monsieur sait sans doute l'arabe?' 'À fond,' said Maurice without turning a hair. Another time a Frenchman was expatiating on the extraordinary variety of the audiences at Bayreuth, '*des hommes d'état, des savants, des artistes, des femmes du monde* . . . ' 'Même des musiciens,' said Maurice, demurely. The Frenchman stared, not tumbling to it at all, and corrected him: '*Surtout des musiciens.*' And in a pause after a long discussion of the Dreyfus case with Anatole France, Maurice said pensively: 'Si, après tout, Dreyfus était coupable.' For a



moment Anatole France was quite nonplussed; and then he burst out laughing.

Here I will drag in another provocative remark of his, from a later time. The scene was a little supper at Lady Horner's, where everybody stopped talking and listened to Harry Cust and Hilaire Belloc, who were having a brilliant set-to across the table. Suddenly Maurice broke in: 'It's a fine sight, to see your two minds up in the air, bumping against one another like two enormous balloons!' 'That, my beloved Maurice,' said Harry, 'is the kind of observation that endears you to all your friends.'

I have mentioned the Baring language\*, or to speak more idiomatically, 'The Expressions.' It was started, I believe, by Maurice's mother and her sister, Lady Ponsonby, when they were little girls, and in the course of two generations it had developed a vocabulary of surprising range and subtlety, putting everyday things in a new light, conveying in nutshells complex situations or states of feeling, cutting at the roots of circumlocution. Those who had mastered the idiom found it almost indispensable, and my stable-companion at the Colonial Office, Conrad Russell, when asked if he knew anyone who knew the Baring language, answered: 'I spend all my days with a Baring monoglot.' One or two words have already passed into the language: 'Pointful' (the opposite to 'pointless') which Desmond MacCarthy constantly uses in his critical writings, is of Baring origin; and only the other day I found 'floater' (which means roughly anything which gives rise to an awkwardness) in a novel by Stevie Smith, who I feel sure doesn't know where it came from†.

\* It would be more properly, though more clumsily, called 'Ponsonby-Baring,' as the Ponsonby family contributed even more to it than the Barings.

† As this word has also been used by P. G. Wodehouse, it is now qualified for admission to the dictionary, and deserves an etymological note. It was originally 'float-face', which meant the flickering shade of disapproval, dissent or surprise which was registered by a face; and it came to mean the action which caused the flicker.

Some of the words were merely imaginative substitutes for ordinary ones, such as 'dewdrop' for a compliment, and 'spike' for a dig. 'Sir Giles,' derived from Sir Giles Overreach in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, meant anything excessive, like the later (and indeed some of the earlier) poems of Swinburne; and anything which fell short was an 'underreach.' 'Brain-stoppage,' which explains itself, was a very serviceable term. Some were taken from the names of individual friends. An 'Edmund,' after Edmund Gosse, was a display of undue touchiness; or an engagement might be 'Edmund' or 'un-Edmund,' according to its bindingness; the latter if there was a possibility of getting out of it, the former if it was like dining with the Medes and Persians. A 'Hubert,' after Hubert Cornish, stood for never being quite ready, and running upstairs to fetch something at the moment of starting for a walk. It was so much pleasanter to say: 'Don't have an Edmund,' or 'a Hubert,' than 'Don't be so thin-skinned,' or 'Don't dawdle.'

Others had their origin in family occurrences. 'What a pretty clock!' said a visitor whom Lady Ponsonby was showing over her house at Windsor. 'Yes, isn't it? The Duke of Connaught gave it me.' Then in the next room: 'There's another pretty clock. Did the Duke of Connaught give you that too?' Thereafter a 'Connaught-clock' signified an unjustified inference. The Antrim family gave a river-party on the Thames, to which the Barings went at some inconvenience, but on the wrong day: hence 'to be in the Antrim Boat' meant to take trouble for nothing—an 'expense of spirit in a waste of virtue.' Maurice wrote to me about a false alarm of an earthquake in Florence, which caused several persons to let themselves down out of their bedroom windows, 'only to find themselves in the Antrim Boat at the bottom.'

'Molly-corkering' was a good word for a hasty and superficial tidying. It was derived from a housemaid whose idea of putting a room to rights was to shove everything that

looked out-of-place under the sofa. I think it was Molly Corker who, when she broke a china animal said sympathetically to Miss Baring: 'It's a pity, Miss—it was a nice cat.'

A 'Rawlinson-plait' was a sudden intimacy, because of a Mrs. Rawlinson who went to a tea-party where she knew no one. The hostess sat her down on a sofa with another guest, and on looking round a few minutes later to see how she was getting on, was reassured to perceive that she had taken her new friend's hand in hers, and was plaiting the fingers together. '*La vieillesse du grand roi*' was a lovely synonym for the *lacrimæ rerum*—of 'old unhappy far-off things'—because one of Maurice's sisters had burst into tears when she came to those words in her history lesson on Louis XIV.

But I am not writing a grammar or a dictionary (though the Expressions deserve one), and I must return to my trickle of narrative. The next item shall be Maurice's beginnings as a writer. In the May Week at the end of his first year he brought out an elegant little daily called the *Cambridge ABC* in four numbers, with a beautiful cover by Aubrey Beardsley. I didn't figure in it, except rather ignominiously as Mr. Ethelbert Swamp in a garden-party dialogue; and three-quarters of it was written by the editor. One feature was a charming series of *Immoral Stories for Children*, exhibiting the triumph of Evil over Good; but best of all was a parody of Arthur Benson, written at Christmas, 1892, when he was eighteen, which still seems to me a little masterpiece. For some reason he has never reprinted it, and I have got his leave to give it here:

### INFORMES HIEMES REDUCIT JUPITER

The busy sun, laborious, large,  
 Above the trees is sinking slow;  
 The chilly fields from marge to marge  
 Are white with complicated snow.

MAURICE BARING

Above the towering, tumbled hills  
Shy grey clouds wander near and far;  
The impatient ravens bite their bills  
Awaiting the unpunctual star.\*

And hidden by the selfish reeds  
The imperial moorhen sits alone,  
Like some great priest that counts his beads,  
Unconscious of the pontiff throne.

Along the hard and dinted road  
The frost is muttering words of fear,  
And strives with bitter shot to load  
The unsubstantial atmosphere.

Six months ago the hopeful plains  
Were starred with spiky bits of bloom;  
The subtle cowslip taking pains  
Forgot the hints of distant doom.

And where to-day the teal blaspheme,  
And huddled widgeon curse the cold,  
Red berries dyed the timorous cream,  
And wasps with liveries of gold,

Like anxious footmen, buzzed about,  
And tender maggots glimmered green,  
While in the yard with dreaming snout  
The hog lay wistful and serene.

What means the sudden change, the glimpse  
Of leafless tree and barren sky?  
How comes it that the pheasant limps  
And stupid starlings starve and die?

\* This anticipates the 'vague unpunctual star' in *Grantchester*; but I am pretty sure Rupert Brooke never saw the piece.

Alas, 'tis vain to catechize  
 The airy plans of Providence;  
 Perchance in some far-off assize  
 We'll know the wherefore, why and whence.

What though we miss the goal, the good,  
 And fringe the nearer, sullen base,  
 And dare not utter as we would,—  
 Two straight lines cannot hold a space.

Does not this hit off perfectly the odd blending of distinction and banality which is to be found in so much of Arthur Benson's poetry?

It was in his Cambridge time that Maurice made his first attempt at fiction, a little story called *Entractes* (and it comes back to me that a lady who saw the title written down took it for the name of a Greek Hero, 'Εντρακτης). The notion was to imply a tragic tale, without telling it, by means of the sayings and doings of the characters between the events. I have completely forgotten it, but this was the kind of thing: if a husband discovered his wife's infidelity in the course of the night, the reader had to divine it from the tone of voice in which he asked her to pass the marmalade at breakfast next morning. Maurice was trying himself too high, and no wonder the book never got into print; but it is interesting to find him so early on the track of the method which he was to conquer in such a novel as *Passing By*.

He had also begun writing poetry, and he has related in the *Puppet Show* how I was the unconscious cause of his deciding, under discouragement from other quarters, to go on with it, by ascribing to Shakespeare these lines from one of his sonnets which he had given me to guess in the Quotation-game:

Sank in great calm, as dreaming unison  
 Of darkness and midsummer sound must die  
 Before the daily duty of the sun.

'Shakespeare' was a peculiarly wild shot, but I still think they are very lovely, and so are many other passages in those early sonnets—

(She in herself, as lonely lilies fold  
Stiff silver petals over secret gold  
Shielded her sorrow . . .)

although they may look rather old-fashioned in these days when so many of the poets seem to have taken as their motto

Absent thee from felicity awhile,

and Milton, if he were writing *L'Allegro*, would have to put:

Of toil and want and penury,  
Of dole and modern industry,  
Such sights as youthful poets dream  
On summer eve by oily stream.

I was also responsible, just as unconsciously, for a change in the fantastic sonnet beginning 'The silver angel,' in which the angel takes the heroine by the hand and leads her to the white silent hall where she is to be frozen into queenhood:

But steadfastly she climbed the winding stair  
And followed firm the strange and glistening touch.

'Oh, how lovely,' I said, when he showed it me, 'the strange and glistening touch!' 'It isn't "touch" at all, it's "torch,"' he answered. However I convinced him that 'touch' was better, and he altered the rhyme to suit it.

It has been rather surprising to discover, since I began to summon up remembrance of these long-past times, how much more *enarrable* Maurice is than my other contemporaries. (If

'inenarrable' is a word I don't see why 'enarrable' shouldn't be one too, though I can't find it in the dictionary.) It is also slightly mortifying to realize how much larger he bulked in my life than I in his; for except as his companion in Germany I don't figure in the *Puppet Show* at all. Anyhow I must resign myself to the acknowledgement that I was putty in his hands; for he brought about a great change in my 'outlook.' Though he was certainly no less cultivated than my other friends, he was not, like them or like the self I had assiduously moulded on their pattern, predominantly devoted to the things of the mind: under his influence I no longer thought it even desirable to 'scorn delights and live laborious days'; I became content to enjoy the passing moment, and yielded to my inborn love of mundane pleasures. Some of the others shook their heads a little, and I remember Robert Trevelyan saying tragically: 'You've lost your birthright;' but I doubt if it really *was* my birthright. The tendency to frivolity, which my Mother had deplored when I was fourteen, could not for ever have been suppressed; and I expect I have led a happier and perhaps even a more useful life than if I had persisted in warping myself into a metaphysician, an earnest Liberal, and what would nowadays be called a highbrow.

Bruton Street, where I lived, was five minutes' walk from Maurice's home in *la rue Charles* on the other side of Berkeley Square, and when we came to London for the 'vac's' we still saw a great deal of one another. He became much attached to my Mother, whom he appreciated to the full; and I made acquaintance with his family and many of his friends. One of the greatest privileges of my life was the favour of his wonderful aunt, Lady Ponsonby, perhaps the wisest and wittiest woman of her time, of whom Dame Ethel Smyth has drawn such a vivid portrait, as she saw her, in the third volume of her *Impressions*. I remember her telling Maurice (and why he left this out of the *Puppet Show* I can't imagine) how much she had enjoyed Renan's *Histoire du Peuple d'Israël*,

and giving him a specimen sentence: 'Mais Jahveh ne se préoccupait guère de ce que pensaient les élégantes de Jérusalem.' Maurice read the entire work in order to view this gem in its setting, but it wasn't to be found! It was Lady Ponsonby's own invention—surely a high-water-mark of parody. She was very fond of the play, and when she was living at Ascot, would come up to London now and then for what she called a theatre-cure; and when the play was French she was best pleased of all. One night a stranger in the stall behind her tut-tutted after the first act and said to her companion in a pained and squeamish tone: 'It's very *French*, isn't it?' Lady Ponsonby rounded on her, *animée et très décidée*, like the first movement of the Debussy quartet: 'Thank God it *is* French.' We came together over La Fontaine, and she told me her favourite line in the Fables was:

Deux coqs vivaient en paix; *une poule survint.*

She had known it happen so often!

At the other end of the age-scale was a little niece, Delia Spencer, who said the most amusing things. Her father was Bobbie Spencer, the Liberal Whip, still famous for 'not being an agricultural labourer'; and Delia, at the age of nine or so, was an ardent politician. 'Never mind, Father,' she said, when he was anxious about his re-election for a division of Northants, 'your children will vote for you.' His opponent's wife was very active and conspicuous in her husband's interest, and there was a feeling in the family that she and Delia had better not meet. But a day came when they were both present at a garden-party on neutral ground, and the introduction could no longer be staved-off. 'I wonder,' the lady began, 'that your mother doesn't speak in support of your father's candidature.' Delia drew herself up to answer: 'Father *can* speak.' (It must have been rather a filial neighbourhood: I remember a little friend of hers, daughter of an M.F.H., who thought that those initials stood for 'My Father Hunts.')



She took an intense interest in learning French, and one night her mother was woken up by a little voice from the cot beside her bed: 'Maman, le jaguar est-il masculin?' Maurice and her mother took her to the Zoo, each holding a hand: and Mrs. Spencer, not realizing the progress she had made, whispered over her head: 'Nous n'irons pas voir les serpents.' The little voice came up from the level of their knees: 'Maman, je désire voir les serpents.' Her scriptural studies were less satisfactory. In the middle of a reading from the Old Testament, she yawned and said she thought the Bible was more a book for boys; and when on her return from the seaside she was told the story of Christ walking on the water, she piped up with: 'I did that at 'Erne Bay.'

One of the new worlds I owed to Maurice was Eton, where he took me to stay with the Cornishes. Much has been written about Mrs. Cornish, especially a full-length portrait in her daughter Mrs. Desmond MacCarthy's *Victorian Childhood*; and I can only add a few trifles, all bearing on what was one of the least important features in her rich personality—her way of bursting out with the most unexpected remarks, made emphatic by her singularly explosive consonants (which must always be imagined in any saying of hers). 'Shocking, her B!' was all she said as she passed me in the exit from St. James's Hall after some none-too-good singing. I was once her escort on the river at Henley Regatta, I rowing and she steering—two arts in which there was little to choose between us. Mrs. Cornish sat brooding over the ropes:

on some great charge imploy'd  
She seemd, or fixt in cogitation deep—

from which in sudden perception of danger she would erupt with urgent cries of 'Ship, Mr. Marsh, ship, ship, if you please!' More by luck than skill, none of the collisions were consummated. One afternoon at tea-time she emerged from

contemplation to ask one of her daughters across the table: 'Dorothy, *what* does Mr. Herbert Spencer look like *in bed*?' Nothing could have been more 'intriguing.' What could be Miss Dorothy Cornish's source of knowledge on such a point? The explanation was that the philosopher was in the habit of commandeering some young lady to play to him on the pianoforte while he reposed for an hour in the afternoon, and she had been roped in.

There is one anecdote which I look upon as peculiarly my own, because I rescued it from oblivion at the moment when it would otherwise have been lost for ever. Meeting Miss Katharine Horner on her return from a first visit to Eton, I asked her if Mrs. Cornish had said anything characteristic, and she answered: 'No, I don't think so;' and then: 'Oh, yes, there was something, what can it have been?' She fished it up: Mrs. Cornish had raised her head from one of her brown studies and ejaculated: 'Kipps—*not* by Kipling: Kim, *not* by Joachim.' Such were the fantastic processes of her tortuous and ingenious mind.

I have no rights in two more stories, but as I have never seen them in print I hope they are admissible. A breezy visitor had been boring her for some time, and she had bravely played her part; but when at last he got up with a slap on his knee and said he must now go and see Arthur Benson, the thought of her friend being subjected to the pains she had 'strongly suffered and supported' for herself was too much for her, and she entreated: 'Oh, spare him, spare him!' And to a young lady who had been singing a French song, she said: 'How wise of you not to attempt the French pronunciation!'

I spent two Long Vacations in Germany, the first at Heidelberg, in a pension where all the other boarders were French boys; so I learnt two languages at once, with a good deal of *argot* thrown in. When I had been there about three weeks, Maurice came to see me from the neighbouring

Schloss Handschuhsheim, where he was staying with its owner, the M.P. for Marylebone, Harry Graham by name (not to be confounded with the brilliant writer who died in 1936). Handschuhsheim was the scene of a battle long ago; and the Schloss, which had originally been a nunnery, was haunted by a well-authenticated ghost, which Maurice and I heard clanking up and down a corridor when we both paid Graham a visit in the following year. Some time in the nineteenth century a skeleton in armour had been found immured behind a wall in which there was a round hole at about the level of a man's mouth; and the theory was that the ghost was a fugitive from the battle, whom the nuns had sheltered and tried to feed through a tube. However that may be, the Schloss in our time stood in a delightful arboretum surrounding a little lake stocked with wild-fowl; and Maurice began a nostalgic poem about it which never got farther than the first two lines:

I long to return to the ghostly garden,  
The tropical trees and the Muscovy ducks.

While we were there the gardener fell ill, and when we asked his wife what was the matter with him, she replied: 'Ich glaube, er hat sich das Oberkörper gewaschen' (I think it's because he washed the upper part of his body.)

To go back to Maurice's visit at the end of my third week at the Pension Scherrer: I told him despairingly that I was no nearer talking German than when I arrived, and he answered with a parable which may give encouragement to other beginners: 'If you turn on the cold tap in a boiling bath, for five minutes it's still a boiling bath: then all at once it's a cold bath. A week from now you'll be talking German.' Sure enough, a few days later I was prattling with the best.

Once I was in command of the two languages, the life at Heidelberg became highly agreeable, and I grew fond of my French companions. One of them, whose name was Stévenel, has remained in my memory as a trenchant and fearless

critic. We heard *Fidelio* together at Mannheim, both for the first time: and as we left the Opera-house he said: 'La musique m'a déplu absolument.' André Poirier was a little boy of about ten. 'Tiens, c'est grand, Heidelberg,' he said one afternoon as we lay on the high ground of the Schloss and gazed upon the town below. 'Pas si grand que ça,' I replied. 'Mais pour une si petite ville . . .' he answered, with profundity and insight as I have always thought. Edmond Lanier had a large repertory of French songs, one of which was a jewel twelve words long:

La Chine est un pays charmant,  
On doit s'y amuser énormément.

(This reads sadly now.)

There was also a version of Siébel's song in *Faust* which years afterwards I had the honour of singing to Madame Melba at Belvoir Castle:

C'est aux pieds que j'ai froid,  
Chauftez-les moi.  
Dites à Joséphine  
De m'porter mes bottines,  
Et de m'chercher mes bas  
Qui sont là-bas.

A year or two later Edmond came to London, and I took him to the musical play at the Gaiety, which I looked upon as the most grown-up entertainment the town could offer to a sophisticated young Frenchman: and in the entr'acte he said indulgently: 'On doit y mener beaucoup d'enfants.'

Heidelberg provided me with my first, and only, experience of baseness in a fellow-creature with whom I was in a personal relation of any intimacy. The Professor had a roster of youths from the town who came every day to talk German with us foreigners, and Ludwig K. was assigned to me as my companion and mentor in the daily walks to an *Aussichtspunkt* (view-point), and on the well-organized

*Ausflüge*, or expeditions to some neighbouring town, which were the high lights of Pension life. I found him very *sympathisch*, and we swore a *Bruderschaft*. Towards the end of my stay he borrowed a few pounds from me, and in the last days he was quite tediously insistent on the certainty of his paying me back. On my final evening he told me how he had gone to the bank that afternoon and found it just closed; and though I begged him not to spoil our remaining moments together with such a paltry consideration, he insisted that he would bring the money to my *Abschied*, or ceremonial seeing-off. Next morning all my friends were on the platform except K., and I steamed away in the miserable conviction that his chivalrous compunction over the debt had lost me the mournful pleasure of a last farewell. I spent most of the journey in the sad mechanic exercise of picking my way through the genders and prepositions of a reproachful letter, and I still recall a touching phrase about 'dein Mangel an Vertrauen an mir, der mich als deinen Freund sehr verletzt' (the want of confidence in me which as your friend hurts me so deeply.)

Nothing further happened, till about a fortnight after my return to London I got a letter from an Englishman named Barth, who had come to stay at the Pension a few days before I left, telling me that he thought I ought to know the character K. was giving me—he had asked Barth to lend him some money, which he needed because *I* had borrowed a hundred marks from *him*, and bilked him. This, as I said, was my first personal contact with black treachery; and if I had been of an inductive turn of mind, it might well have soured me for life.

A Frenchman I had met at Heidelberg, whose English sounded better than it was, had told me that if I would break my return journey at his house I should enjoy his wife. This seemed too good to be true; but I never put it to the test, as it suited me better to stop at Rheims for a visit to the home of

my pension-friends, Pierre and Jean Détré. On my first evening the Mayor of Rheims came to dinner, and enriched me with one of the most lapidary phrases I have ever heard from human lips. Madame Détré had expressed concern at his refusing a second help of her choicest dish, and he answered: 'Tenez, Madame, je vais vous expliquer ça: je suis très mal monté comme appareil de mastication.' I tried to imagine an English Worship saying that he was ill-equipped in the matter of implements for mastication: in pomposity he might have equalled the Frenchman, but surely not in orotundity.

My second and last German summer was the one which Maurice and I spent together at Hildesheim; but of this I have scarcely anything to tell, as he has completely emptied our common 'bag of anecdotes' in the *Puppet Show*. I only remember his answer to a lecture which the governess in me impelled me to give him one morning on always being late for breakfast. 'Why shouldn't I come down late?' he asked. 'Well, you can't like a cold egg.' 'Of course I don't like a *bitterly* cold egg.'

Perhaps a line may be given to one of our companions, Carl Buchheister, an amiable peppery fat boy whom Maurice has not mentioned. He had just come back from a visit to England, which he had disliked intensely, especially the breakfasts—'das *Bacon* war furchtbar'—and he hated having to wear a *Cylinder-hut* (topper). When I asked him why in that case he had worn one, he said, 'natürlich wünschte ich für einen *Gentleman* gerechnet zu werden' (I naturally wanted to pass for a gentleman). Nowadays he would probably pass for an undertaker.

I had been extremely popular at Heidelberg, but at Hildesheim, though I got on very well with the German boys, I completely failed with our hosts, Professor and Frau Timme. Everything I said or did was taken wrong, and I heard that after my departure the Professor had summed me up as 'ein ganz abscheulicher Kerl' (a quite abominable

chap); moreover 'er lief den Mädchen nach' (he ran after the maids)—this because I had once been caught in flagrant duologue, solely for practice, with the slavey who was doing the lamps. But at the time I was conscious of no more than slightly strained relations, and I have seldom been so much damped as when on my departure the Professor bleakly answered my 'Auf Wiedersehen' with 'Leben Sie wohl, Herr Marsch.'

My next reunion with Maurice was at Scoones's, the famous establishment in Garrick Street for coaching aspirants to the Civil and Diplomatic Services. I went there for a few months in 1897 on leaving Cambridge after the second term of my fifth year at Trinity; but Maurice had been a disciple, off and on, for years. Twice, in spite of his linguistic brilliance, he had failed in the Diplomatic examination, because he was congenitally incapable of arithmetic. My own arithmetic was nothing to boast of, but at any rate I could go on adding up a column of figures till I satisfied myself by getting the same total twice: Maurice could add them up all day and *never* get the same total twice. (The only other man I have known who had this inaptitude in the same degree was the poet Lionel Johnson, whose mind in every other respect was of the first order.) When Maurice did finally pass at his third attempt with the precise minimum of marks for Mathematics—not 99 or 101, but exactly 100—there was a wide-spread belief that the examiners had exercised a judicious leniency. This was based on inference; though there were some who professed to know that Arthur Balfour had been heard to say: 'I'd do anything for John' (i.e. Maurice's eldest brother, Lord Revelstoke.)

Mr. Scoones, a taut, mercurial, elegant little man with beautiful white hair and a little white beard, attached supreme importance to his classified lists of recondite French words, which the pupils were expected to commit to memory. We christened them generically, after a typical specimen,

'Parts of a Ship.' (One of them stood me in good stead in after years when at an evening with Edmund Gosse George Moore was holding forth on the odd fact that an Englishman who like himself might be supposed from long residence in Paris to know French perfectly could be caught out in ignorance of the French for some quite common object. 'I imagine,' he said, 'that none of you can tell me the French for "larch."' When I said *mélèze*, he fell back in his chair from astonishment.) Maurice gave a delightful sketch of Mr. Scoones inculcating the value of these lists on a batch of new *alumni*. 'There was that fellow Marsh—knew French almost as well as English: what happened at the viva voce? They asked him: "What's the French for the little bit of lead at the bottom of the water-closet?" And he didn't know, poor boy! he hadn't learnt my lists! he was ploughed!'

*A little kindness—and putting her hair in papers—  
would do wonders with her—(Through the Looking-Glass)*

*Bear your body more seeming, Audrey. (As You Like It)*

One friend I made at Scoones's, George Grahame, later Ambassador to Belgium and Spain, and already a finished man of the world, had a powerful influence on my life. He took a liking to me, but found much to wish otherwise in my outer man; so he formed a scheme in his mind for inducing me to array and demean myself less like a Cambridge intellectual and more like a young man about town. With this in view he invited me to spend a Saturday-to-Monday with him at Margate, and in the course of a bicycle-ride to Canterbury on the Sunday afternoon gave me a complete curriculum of wrinkles on clothes and deportment. If I would observe his precepts, there was no reason, he was kind enough to say, why everybody shouldn't like me, 'from the Queen to the dustman.' I pondered these things in my heart, and gradually remoulded myself nearer to his heart's desire. Now that my attitude towards my clothes is 'Grow



old along with me,' I look back with indulgence on my frock-coat and my enormous folded ties, which I expect would look very funny now; for men's clothes have gone through a revolution. I remember Charles Hawtrey, soon after the War, playing a man who had been a prisoner in Germany, and scurried home on his release, only stopping at Dover to buy himself a suit off the peg at a pawnbroker's. His appearance gave the audience what is called a belly-laugh; yet I was told the suit was the last that had been made for King Edward VII, though through his sudden illness it had never been worn; so ten years before it must have been in the height of the fashion.

But funny or not, I can see myself on a Sunday afternoon, in all my glory, choosing an omnibus for Highgate. One of the conductors beckoned me with a charming smile: 'Come in 'ere Sir,' he said, 'this is the only bus of any consequence on this 'ere line.' This was gratifying; but there is another street-story, of later date, which still makes me blush for my petulance and unkindness. I was walking home to Gray's Inn down Theobalds Road, in full evening dress, when a stranger stopped me and asked if he might speak to me as one man of the world to another. 'By all means,' I answered, pleased at being recognized for what I was. *Stranger*: 'Then will you buy this pot of cinerarias?' *E.M. (nettled)*: 'My good sir, if you were really a man of the world you would know that the last thing you could expect of a man of the world was that he should carry about a pot of cinerarias.'

Perhaps the most crucial of Grahame's reforms was the substitution of an eye-glass for a pince-nez; and to this I have been faithful ever since. To-day an eye-glass is the mark of an old fogey, but in 1897 it was decidedly swanky; so much so that a young Frenchman in Paris said of me: 'Il paraît assez simple, quoiqu'il porte un monocle'—as if that were the last word in sophistication.

Few people seem to care much nowadays how men are dressed, but there are quarters in which the old critical

spirit survives. Only a year or two ago I sat at a luncheon-party next Mrs. A. J., an Edwardian of decided views and trenchant tongue. 'Who's that?' she asked severely, pointing across the table at Rex Whistler. She listened to my enumeration of Rex's claims to distinction, and said: 'Why can't he wear a proper collar?' I then had to account for Desmond MacCarthy, who is usually quite presentable, but did on this occasion happen to look a little tousled; and she asked: 'Why can't these clever people brush their hair?' Upon which I gave myself away as I hope I have seldom done before or since, and put my hand to my head with a soothing gesture. She was down on me like a cart-load of hot potatoes. 'Of course *you're* all right, but I never said *you* were clever.'

When Maurice at last got into the Diplomatic Service, he went through the usual period of training at the Foreign Office, where he was attached to the Commercial Department. Here it was one of his duties to prepare what were called P.L.s, or Printed Letters, i.e. single blue folio sheets on which the outlines of various routine communications were copper-plated, with blanks to be filled-in *ad hoc*. The room was presided over by an exceedingly competent and experienced Second Division Clerk, who rated Maurice's clerical faculties low; and once when an Under-Secretary came in to see how the recruits were getting on, he pointed with his thumb to where Maurice was sitting hunched over his desk, with his short-sighted eyes close to the P.L., his pen poised dubiously over one of the spaces and dropping a blot of ink on it. '*He's* a daisy,' said the Clerk. I hope Maurice won't mind my telling this story. I can't resist it, as the notion of him as a Daisy has always given me intense delight.

Soon after this he went abroad, and I must now let go the thread that has guided me through the years in which we were so much together; but before taking leave of him for

the present I will give a taste of the letters he wrote me from foreign parts. They are in a different vein from the brilliant critical epistles to Vernon Lee and H. B. Brewster which Ethel Smyth has printed in her book about him.

'British Embassy, Paris.

'Jan. 8. 1899.

'Americans are sadly lacking in *le sentiment de la mesure*. I had luncheon at the Ritz Hotel with the American Minister at Rio. It was a luncheon given to five Brazilian Ministers at Paris. The table was banked with roses lilac mignonette and pink carnations, and a cuckoo sang in a recess of marigolds. A fountain of Jockey-Club scent soared from a silver pond in which were real nautilli.

'The vista of wine-glasses was interminable and kaleidoscopic—red blue and white, like witches' oils, and in front of every guest was a large bouquet of Extinct Orchids. The very hors d'œuvres were Great Auk's Eggs, and one felt one was cheating the British Museum in eating them. Then came the spoils of Russian lakes and Norwegian fiords, the spices of the West Indies, the Urim and Thummim (an American dish) and the Terapin (an American dish likewise) and the juvilas [uvulas] of Humming birds and the larynxes of nightingales and a Welsh Mammoth.

'It was almost a waste, as the guests were following a strict régime and were only allowed to eat stale bread and drink mineral water. So I had to eat most of it, and I haven't been the same since.'

'March 1905.

British Embassy, St. Petersburg.

'O Eddy beloved, the star of my hope,  
As steadfast as oak-trees, as strong as a rope,  
Infallible, triple, and wise as the Pope,

This is but the truth and not merely a trope,  
To me who midst error scarce know how to grope  
Perplexed by the merits of Monkey Brand soap  
Compared with Vinolia; destined to mope  
In an ignorant wilderness, helpless to cope  
With the thoughts that once shone and so swiftly elope,  
On the fugitive plane and the vanishing slope,  
To you all my heart, all my soul, I now ope.

'I enclose in fact a cheque for eight months, on re-reading this sentence I see that it is not clear, I meant eight pounds, and I suppose Bankers are too conventional (and you too for the matter of that) to understand that if one says please pay E. Marsh eight months one means eight pounds.

My brain is like a hard-boiled egg  
That on the table waits in vain;  
You see—the question thus I beg,  
My brain is like a hard-boiled egg.  
I know not where is Winnipeg,  
I have forgot the French for Spain.  
My brain is like a hard-boiled egg  
That on the table waits in vain.

I am on my way to *Central Russia*, to the *black country*, I am going to take part in the Elections.

'I am a candidate, my claims for election being total *Omniscience*; and if I am asked the reason I shall say that I am one of God's younger sons. . . .'

'Russia. March 18, 1907.

'MY DEAR E.—

'You wish to know the truth of the mad-dog incident. You shall. It was like this. Countess Bobrinsky's small

white Chinese dog was violated by an enormous mastiff and had two puppies. The puppies were huge.

'And when after her confinement the white and tiny Chinese dog began to show signs of malaise, nobody thought it odd because it seemed natural that a small chow should show signs of malaise after so shattering an experience. It was the opposite of the adage. A mouse gave birth to a mountain. And nobody was surprised at the mouse being not quite the thing. On the third day the chow whose name was Folly began to lick everybody feverishly and to run about the house. It complained also of seeing imaginary snakes and of Weltschmerz generally. On the fourth day it licked an open sore on my hand and snapped at my nose and succeeded in biting my nose twice without drawing blood. On the fifth day it bit the maid and the other dog, its husband, and the housekeeper; but all this biting was said to be in self-defence since the big dog had looked at the puppies and the little dog had then spat at it, flown at it and finally bitten it, and the maid and the housekeeper had been bitten in the separating of them. On the sixth day the chow died. Its last words were "Roll up that map of China," but some authorities state that it said "more bones"—Then a post-mortem examination was held and its brain was put under the microscope. In its brain which was blue, a small red spot, bright as a ruby, was discernible. The doctors said the dog must have been mad. And Countess Bobrinsky, the maid, housekeeper, son and daughter and I were sent to the Pasteur Institute and inoculated with mad Welsh rabbit, but not as some people now say with March Hare. It appears according to the latest authorities that Hares are seldom mad, and never in *March*.

'Two live rabbits were inoculated with portions of the dead Folly. Our inoculation proceeded day by day and my body turned blue and my brain dwindled and grew

slow by degrees and gradually less, and soft as sleeping summer's silken down. Countess Bobrinsky had heart-beatings and an intermittent headache, and gasped for breath. The housekeeper had nettle-rash and spasms. The boy wrote an epic on inoculation and the gastric juices. The girl made feverish love to the three doctors, and the other dog sang like a canary.

'The rabbits went mad and died, like Charles II and Petronius Arbiter, civil to the last, with cynical dignity. In the meantime news came from Xarkov that a man whose ear had been licked by a dog which subsequently had gone mad, had also died of hydrophobia.

'After being inoculated twelve times, and when our bodies were like that of St. Sebastian and permanently disfigured, and our whole systems had been convulsed, as though by earthquake and eclipse, the treatment ceased. The big dog is still sane (it was also inoculated) but the two puppies died with eyes full of perishing dreams and the wrecks of forgotten delirium. This was because Folly had licked her puppies, not bitten but merely licked them as a mother should.

'This is, I think, all.'

But Maurice mustn't have it all his own way, and I will finish with a letter from *me* to *him*, about a volume of Dryden that he had found among his books, and posted to me in the belief that it was my property:

'You send me Dryden, volume IV—

Maurice, alas 'twas never mine!

I never saw the book before;

On other shelves vols: V to IX

And I to III its loss deplore:

Try to remember from whose store

You borrowed it in years of yore—

Probably long before the War.

A N U M B E R   O F   P E O P L E

Think well, what lonely heart can pine  
To see that calf-bound back once more,  
That graceful print, those *tranches d'or*,  
Those lett'rings fine, that idly shine  
Till to its comrades you restore  
Their long-lost peregrine.'

I give his answer, not because it was in any way a worthy return for my epistle, but for the sake of the unexpected and advantageous light in which it purports to show him. Who could have imagined that he had so much system?

'You are quite right. You did lend me *The Hind and The Panther* on the 23rd June, 1894, but I returned it to you on Feb. 5, 1895. The book I sent you yesterday belonged to my late Uncle Thomas.

'Yours M. B.'

October 3, 1923.







EDWARD MARSH, *circa* 1904

*From a painting by Neville Lylton*

## CHAPTER V

### PERSONALITIES I

(by which I mean the persons themselves, not disagreeable things about them.)

ROBERT BRIDGES — Canon Beeching — *Euripides the Rationalist* — EDMUND GOSSE — Max Beerbohm — George Moore — Austin Dobson — Sidney Colvin — Swinburne — Wordsworth — Browning — HENRY JAMES — The O.M.

### I

#### ROBERT BRIDGES

IT was by an extraordinary stroke of good fortune that I made the acquaintance and I think I may say friendship of this great man at the very earliest age at which I could have understood or valued my privilege. 'Oh for the pen of a' Hazlitt, to convey my First Meeting with a Poet! It came about in this way. When I was fourteen or so I 'outgrew my strength,' and after a severe bout of German measles my parents decided to take me away from Westminster for the Autumn term, so lodgings were hired for my sister and me in a village called Coldash, a few miles from Newbury. Here I made great friends with a delightful neighbour, Mrs. Denniston, the wife of an Indian Civil Servant, who had lately set up a home for her young family on the top of the hill. She was just as fond of poetry as I was, and we rioted together through Browning, Swinburne and Rossetti. (She had a 'Shelley-plain'\* about Rossetti—he had taken her in to

\* A useful Baring expression for a glimpse of a great man.

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,  
And did he stop and speak with you?

When I read in Charles Lamb's Letters: 'Shelley I saw once. His voice was

dinner when she was a girl and told her that the then-celebrated actress Leah Bateman, whom he had seen the night before, was 'like an exaggerated baby'). In a sort of odd-job room in her house there were fat volumes of Elizabethan plays, in which I consumed lashings of Webster Ford and Massinger, rather on the sly, as I wasn't sure they would be 'allowed;' and for the only time in my life I read the *Faerie Queene* 'slap through.' Altogether, Coldash was a great success, and we took to going there regularly for the holidays. I am vague about the dates, but I think it must have been in the second year that Mrs. Denniston drove me over to see Robert Bridges at Yattendon, which was not far off. He took a circumstantial interest in me from the first, because he had kept a great esteem for my Father, under whom he had studied at Bart's; and a more personal one when I had the luck to tell him, on our first country walk together, that my favourite poem of Shelley's was 'On a poet's lips I slept,' which he said showed a remarkably sound taste in one so young!

His noble shaggy head, his big loose-limbed stature, his easy clothes and tropical ties (I remember a bright yellow one, and another which was peacock-blue), his grand deep burry voice with its very slight occasional stammer,\* and his air of a great gentleman, made him the most impressive figure I have known. What can I recapture of my infant Boswellizings?

One morning's discourse was on the old question of Art *versus* Conduct, in which he firmly took the side of Conduct, holding that genius was no excuse for bad behaviour.

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the most obnoxious squeak I ever was tormented with,' I found myself altering the second line to:

And did he stop and squeak to you?

\* It wasn't exactly a stammer, but a slight retardation of the consonants, as if they were bursting through a hedge (*ἔρκος ὀδόντων*). It makes his sayings more amusing to imagine this, and in reporting them I have sometimes doubled a first letter as a reminder, but this doesn't really give the effect.

Conversely, in dripping a little cold water on my youthful admiration for Andrew Lang as a writer, he exalted him as a shining example of character. Once upon a time Lang had given an enthusiastic review to a book of poems by a new author, and the graceless cockerel had repaid him with an impudent and contemptuous attack, at which Lang was perceptibly hurt. Two or three years later he paid a visit to Yattendon, and Bridges met him on his way to the house, reading a new book with every sign of pleasure. 'Why,' said Bridges, 'it's by that ung-rateful young c-cub who treated you so badly.' But Lang's mind was a complete blank on the whole affair. That, Bridges told me, was the mark of a truly beautiful nature. Anybody might forgive an injury, but to forget all about it was sublime.

He made good fun of Arthur Benson, who bought a little house called Clack's End, and had the words FINIS COLLOQUII carved on the lintel. 'Fancy having a p-permanent joke over one's f-front door! How sick he'll get of having to exp-lain it!'

He showed me my first Gerald Hopkins, the sonnet called *The Starlight Night*. I thought it very strange, but I remember the excitement of the 'airy abeles' and 'Look at all the fire-folk sitting in the sky!' And I recall a disquisition on Assonance, in which he laid down the principle that in primitive rhyming it was the vowels that counted: with cultivation the consonants came into their own, and a consonantal rhyme could be allowed even if the vowels were different, but not *vice versa*. (To show what I mean, if he had been writing the *Ancient Mariner* he would sooner have rhymed 'dust' with 'lost' than with 'gush'd'.)

It is sad to relate that for some reason I have quite forgotten he was at variance with the Rector of Yattendon, who was no other than Canon Beeching, himself a poet and a scholar, (perhaps best known for his poem on the boy riding a bicycle). They usually kept out of one another's way, and I only once saw them together, when I was out walking with

the Bridges' and we came on the Beechings at the turn of a lanc. The two ladies stopped and exchanged civilities, while the Canon stood a little sheepishly on one side, looking rather like my idea of James the Less, and Mr. Bridges, on the other, quite unconcerned, played with his huge dog, leaping to right and left high in the air on his long legs, and saying: 'Hi good fellow! Ho good fellow!'

I am sorry that my only other recollection of Canon Beeching, who was a good and gifted man, should also be on the comical side. The occasion was a Sunday evening sermon in Yattendon Church, which he began by saying that Infidelity was stalking through the land, and the time had come to make a stand against it; he therefore proposed first to set forth the principal arguments which had been advanced against the truth of Christianity, and then to refute them. He proceeded to pile up a really tremendous case for Unbelief, and I grew more and more nervous, wondering how on earth he was going to overthrow it. After about half an hour of this there was a long pause, at the end of which he looked at his watch, and said that as it was growing late he would put off the second part of his sermon till next Sunday. Next Sunday he preached in support of the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen.

Rutherford of Westminster used to maintain that no man could be said to be a true believer unless he was capable of laughing at his religion. Mr. Bridges, who was a sincere but undogmatic Christian, bore this out. 'I like to r-rile the parsons,' he once told me. 'I ask them, w-why three Gods in one? W-why not five Gods in two? It r-riles the parsons.'

One of the Berkshire neighbours had been a Miss Hughes, and full of this piece of information I said to Mr. Bridges: 'I hear Mrs. ——'s father was the author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*.' He answered dryly: 'There's a p-rize for anyone who mentions her without saying that.' He inveighed against the narrow imaginations of the servants, who could never conceive that one wanted anything except the next

meal. 'If I r-ring the bell after breakfast, they bring luncheon; if I ring after luncheon, they bring tea; and I daren't ring after dinner for fear they should b-ring b-reakfast.'

I never again saw so much of him as in the Coldash days, but our friendship was permanent, and in later years I used to stay with him on Boar's Hill just outside Oxford. One night he came to my bedroom in his dressing-gown, looking as if he had stepped down from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, and commanded me to stop smoking in bed, because the house was entirely built of wood, and might at any moment go up in flames. (In the fulness of time it did, and I was thankful not to have been the culprit.) I felt very much flattered by his seeking my opinions on his 'quantitiv' system of prosody, but saw no sign of his profiting by them.

I have a good many letters from him, mostly on practical matters or small literary points. There is a characteristic sentence in one of them, about the threatened construction of an aerodrome four miles from Oxford: 'Whether it might not be for the ultimate good of the human race that all its records shd be destroyed, I cannot pretend to judge;' and in September 1914 he made an important suggestion: '*Why shd we have to feed all the German prisoners and the innumerable waiters, etc.?*' Have the Government considered whether all Germans might not be sent to PORTUGAL? She (is it not?) declared war, if I am not mistaken: what cd *she* do better than take these nuisances in hand???' (I don't know if the little parenthesis was meant to cast doubt on the sex of Portugal, or what.)

When the *Testament of Beauty* came out, I asked him if when he wrote the lines about the Partridge and her young he had had in his mind La Fontaine's description in the *Discours à Madame de la Sablière*, and enclosed a postcard with 'Yes—No' on it, requesting him to 'strike out the alternative which did not apply.' He sent it back with the Yes scratched out, and my No embedded in a quotation which I don't recognize:

'He sedd No with won of the most tremenjjs nox I iver  
ixpeeriuntsed.'

I have leave to print the best letter I ever got from him, about Dr. Verrall's *Euripides the Rationalist*, which I had lent him. Verrall's theory was, very roughly, that Euripides wrote his mythological plays so that they could be taken in two sences, one by the vulgar, who thought they were merely being told the old old stories, and the other by the intellectuals, who were supplied with a rationalistic explanation of the myths; for instance, Alcestis did not die, but was brought back to life from a trance. This is not now a very burning question, but it made a peg for some interesting incidental remarks.

'Yattendon, May 17, 95.

'MY DEAR MARSH,—

'I have read Mr. Verrall's book, and can return it when you will, but shd prefer to keep it awhile. It is excellent, though I wish it had been as briefly as it is clearly expressed. The iteration soon set me skipping and perhaps for that sin I miss the exact drift. For one cannot be asked to believe that E's art is good because it is consciously aimed wrong. It seems to me the Essay hits E harder than he has ever been hit. For whereas his incongruities (which Aristotle terms *ἀνώμαλον*) are exposed more thoroughly than I have ever seen—and this is very much to my taste—there is added a charge which amounts to more than that of a lack of the instinct which led so many Greeks right in art, in spite of their theory—i.e. that E consciously set before himself a wrong aim.

'Of course E was a rationalist, and rationalism spoiled his art—and except for his great scenic gifts, and a pathetic touch in his "morals" (in which he wd excel if he were not so often wrong) and his great ease of practising (this caught in great part from the infection

of a splendid time) he is not a fine Creator. But Mr. Verrall makes him a Philistine. It is difficult for me to imagine an audience who cd believe, say, in the resurrection of Alcestis, and yet could understand such an argument as Mr. V. makes the "Alcestis" to be. Yet this Alcestis chapter is very convincing. The play is going to be acted at Bradford this year, and I shall take the opportunity of studying it from V's point of view. But wd he have one think that Aeschylus believed in the resurrection of Alcestis? Idealists don't *believe* fables. An idealist wd see the beauty of the idea of a resurrection, and wd make the most of it in a work of art. The impossibility is a main factor of the beauty. It seems to me that it takes a very thick-skinned ass to write a play of a resurrection in which the main point is that the whole affair was a mistake. That cd please no one but a prig.

'Of course I can't pretend to know the state of mind of Eur's audience; but that he has been praised as he has goes with me to show how worthless praise is. How few of those who praise or love Homer understand a millionth of his merit. I read in a french book the other day that the country of the Cossacks is "full of Homers." Now Aristophanes and Aristotle both knew, and they both said very true things about Euripides, and if Aristophanes says more about morals than one expects in such a criticism, I hold that he was right, and that morality, being spiritual beauty, is the highest requisite in art which idealises man. I don't of course mean conventional morality and grant that Aristophanes goes too far, or wd go too far if he were not poking fun as much as saying just what he thought. Eur's manners and morals are shaky. But then Milton praised E just as he praised Ben Jonson, (who had E's *ἠνώμαλον* and *παραδείγματα πονηρίας μὲν ἔθους μὴ ἀναγκαίου* without his poetry or tragic gift) and he says that Ovid was as good a



poet as Virgil. And if Milton can say these things what can surprise us? Euripides sits by Aeschylus, and will sit, as Byron squats by Shakespeare. Not even Goethe could see that all "things invisible," and most visible things separate their thrones. You will see how Mr. V's book has interested me, but I was to have been in Cornwall to-day, and am kept at home by an attack of rheumatism. It is better. I shall try and make up my mind on the Verrall thesis, he makes out a very strong case . . . i.e. that most of E's blunders were intentional. The opposite thesis would be that there are so many blunders demonstrably unintentional that it really doesn't matter what E's intention was. Tell me if you want the book back.

'Yours very truly

'R. BRIDGES.'

## 2

## EDMUND GOSSE

Considering what my relations with Edmund Gosse were to be, it is funny to remember that I first met with his name in Churton Collins' notorious philippic against his book *From Shakespeare to Pope*, which appeared in the *Quarterly Review* for November 1885, when I was exactly thirteen years old. That is an impressionable age, and the impression made on my little mind by Collins' vituperations and fulminations was one of the strongest of my childhood. What a miserable wretch this Edmund Gosse must be! Such depths of ignorance, such shallows of sciolism, such heights of pretension—'Hot shame shall burn upon thy secret brow'—this was the tenor though not the language of my reflections. I was thrilled and chilled with horror, and for a long time the sight of his name rekindled my first scorn and

pity. Fortunately for me, the years did their kindly work. Finding to my surprise that he had not been hounded out of letters and was still allowed to publish, I read other works of his and enjoyed them; and by the time I made his acquaintance, I would just as soon have shaken hands with him as with anybody else.

It must have been in my third year at Trinity that I met him, at tea with the Verralls, and laid the foundations of a friendship which was to be one of the treasures of my life. Evan Charteris creamed my recollections of him and his letters to me for his enchanting biography, but I have a few left.

It was Maurice Baring who got me in, so to speak, on the ground floor. Gosse and he were already devoted to one another, and remained so to the end; but the tricky Maurice of those days gave him much to bear, and got away with things that would never have been forgiven to me or anybody else, for instance, a telegram from Trinity College: 'Maurice Baring passed away peacefully this afternoon, Boughey' (Dr. Boughey was his Tutor). Maurice of course had never dreamt that Gosse would fail to smell this powerful rat, but strange to say he did: he put Heaven and Earth in motion, set up an agitation in Arthur Benson, and went so far as to break the news with qualms and delicacy to the formidable eldest brother. Maurice was very penitent. 'It's *fun*,' he said in self-rebuke, 'to throw a tortoise up in the air.'

I soon got the entrée to Gosse's house in Delamere Terrace, and thereby to the literary company of my dreams. Henry James is 'reserved' as the saying goes, 'for separate treatment;' and I wish I had anything to tell of Thomas Hardy, but he was content to bask in Gosse's beams, and I never heard him say anything that couldn't have been said by the most self-effacing parasite. Max Beerbohm was just as wise and gentle and demure as he is to-day. I remember his description of Sir Arthur Pinero's eyebrows, 'which looked like skins of

some small mammal, just not large enough to be used as mats.' Somebody remarked on the diminutive size of the figures in William Orpen's pictures, and Max said it was because he was so small himself. 'He sits down to paint, and says "Now I'll do a tremendously big fellow—I should think about five foot six."' One day the conversation turned on Christian names, and Gosse told of a couple who had produced three little girls: they christened the first Elizabeth, the second Jane, and for the third fell back upon Eliza. Max capped this with a man he had known at Oxford who was born Creswell-Creswell, and baptized Creswell; and I can still hear the austere elegance which he gave to that august simplicity: 'Creswell Creswell Creswell.' (I was reminded of this when I read in *The Times* that the name of the British hawfinch was really called '*Coccothraustes Coccothraustes Coccothraustes*.')

Gosse and George Moore were deeply attached to one another, and it was pleasant and amusing to watch their affectionate, slightly catty relation: Gosse always amused and a little patronizing, Moore, who struck me as having a strong inferiority-complex,\* a tinge resentful. I never quite took to Moore, or got accustomed to his large tallowy (or on his good days apple-blossom-waxy) face and pale eyes ('I'm glad he's found someone to paint his blobby eyes for him,' said an inimical lady at sight of Walter Sickert's famous portrait); and he was disagreeably ungenerous towards his brother-writers—this was no doubt a symptom of the 'inflex.' I only once had a 'Conversation in Ebury Street,' and then I was a failure. My notion of talk was, not indeed to contradict my interlocutor, but to carry the subject a stage farther with each remark. This didn't suit Moore, who wanted me to be like the courtiers in Voltaire

\* I once tried to portmanteau this ungainly but now indispensable word, and wrote to *The Times*, with the approval of that great arbiter of language, Logan Pearsall Smith, to suggest that it should be cut down to 'inflex'; but nothing has come of it.

one of whom said *Il aura raison* when the Sultan opened his mouth, and the other *Il a raison* when he had spoken. 'You will argue,' he said (giving the vowel the sound which a sheep makes in pronouncing the word *baa*); 'you don't understand conversation. Conversation isn't argument. You shouldn't argue so much.'

To compensate for this, I had one great success with him, which I must be allowed to commemorate. About two years before, Winston Churchill had taken up with painting, and though he was naturally not the accomplished artist he has since become, he had made remarkable progress. Moore came up to me at a party and said: 'You're the man who'll be able to tell me—what *are* Winston's pictures like?' 'Well,' I replied, 'they're exactly like pictures.' This enchanted him, and he repeated it everywhere. And I can't bring myself not to flaunt a compliment which he paid me on my epistolary style. I had written to ask his opinion on the proposal of a Civil List grant to James Joyce; and I have Mr. C. D. Medley's leave to print his answer:

'It pleased me to get your letter this morning for I was glad to hear of you; and the letter was so well written, clear and fluent and always to the point expressing everything you had in mind to say. Nothing seems to have got lost between the brain and the pen.' There was glory for me! This letter, which was written in August 1916, went off into Irish politics, and ended vigorously: 'Democratic principles are unsuited to Ireland. Already the people are beginning to regret their landlords and to hate the Congested District Board. The Irish like priests and believe in the power of priests to forgive them their sins and to change God into a biscuit. They are only happy in convents and monasteries. The only reason that the Irish would tolerate home rule would be if they were given permission to persecute someone, that is the Roman Catholic idea of liberty. It always has been and always will be. I am an admirer of Mr. Asquith and regret that he cannot bring himself to believe that there can be no settle-

ment, and that all attempts at settlement will fail. The Irish like discipline, and if Mr. Asquith would treat the Irish as the Pope does he would be the most popular man in Ireland.'

Another friend whom I made through Gosse was the exquisite poet Austin Dobson, whose verses are too studied for the present taste and have been thrust aside, though surely their perfection of workmanship, their humour and charm and glimpses of deep feeling, must some day bring them back to repute. He was a dear little man, stumpy, with pince-nez and a large grey moustache, and a very low shy voice—rather like a large, intelligent and kindly guinea-pig, or perhaps a beaver. Gosse was very fond of him, and loved to tease him; but in his beautiful humility he never dreamt of cutting up rusty; and certainly, if anyone else had laid a finger on him (not that anyone would) Gosse would have flown to his defence like an angry hen. He liked to make out (this of course behind his back) that Dobson was oppressed in the home circle—'duck-pecked by his lawful wife,' as Southey said of the poet Duck—and regaled us with imaginary scenes at the breakfast-table: for instance, Mrs. Dobson taking first chop at *The Times*. 'Hm—I see Sir Reginald Wingate has been made Sirdar;' then, with a sardonic look at her husband, 'I never hear any talk of making *you* Sirdar.' This reminds me of another author's wife whose attitude to her husband met with Gosse's disapproval, the first Mrs. Thomas Hardy. (I had heard before that she used to say in a querulous voice: 'Mr. Hardy is never in the least grateful'). Gosse told us that when she died her diaries were read, and found to be full of 'The W.M.' This was evidently a synonym for T.H., but why? Farther on it became clear that the initials stood for 'The Wicked Man.'

Sidney Colvin was another friend in common. His dry but

vibrant voice, and the chiselled face on which the dry skin was tightly stretched over the thin cover of flesh that revealed the neatness of his small domed skull, seemed emblems of the tense control which his inward fires were never very long in evading. Gosse had a good specimen of his eruptions. A Committee of the Fitzwilliam Museum, of which he was Curator, was vacillating over the choice of a colour for repainting one of the rooms, and he burst out in rasping tones well suited to his theme: 'I deprecate a keen, shrill blue that bites into the eye.'

His Curatorship was clouded by a sad misfortune, which I think is little known, as I never heard of it except from Gosse. He had occasion to bring a sheaf of Italian drawings to London, and on his way from the station he stopped for a moment at the Savile Club, leaving his treasures in the hansom. Inside the club, lo and behold Robert Louis Stevenson, unexpectedly returned after a long absence. Time, the drawings, all was forgotten; and when after some hours Colvin reissued into Piccadilly the hansom and its contents had disappeared for ever. The Museum authorities were as considerate as possible, and stretched every point; but they were Trustees, and the drawings valuable—poor Colvin was crippled for years by the instalments he had to pay from his salary.

His good angel ought certainly to have warned him of danger from Italian drawings. He brought out a portfolio of magnificent reproductions from the Christ Church Library, with the most scholarly of annotations; and in describing a Crucifixion he called one of the figures the *Third Thief*. The implication was disastrous, and I was cruel enough to point it out. I had expected him to be a little disconcerted, but when I saw what I had done I was filled with remorse. Like the sunset described by Queen Victoria, he grew 'pinker and pinker and pinker,' culminating in such an exuberance of crimson as I have never seen on a cheek. There was nothing to be done: to insert an erratum in the remaining copies,

'For Third Thief read Second Thief,' would only have made things worse.

Gosse was full of tales about Swinburne, most of which he has given to the world; but not, I think, the day which Swinburne spent at Delamere Terrace in suppressed agitation, evidently bubbling over with something, but nobody could guess what. At last out it came. 'All day,' he gurgled to his hostess, 'I've been wondering who ought to have painted you, and at first I thought it was Palma Vecchio, but now I *know* it was Paris Bordone.'

There was a story about Wordsworth in which Gosse claimed private rights, making me promise never to tell it without saying that it was really his. I have seen the naked anecdote in print, but it is much more enjoyable in its proper setting, which was an evening party in London where Wordsworth and Tom Moore were the two lions. Everyone clustered round Moore, who was letting off all his fireworks; and the hostess suddenly noticed that Wordsworth was sitting apart, looking a little moody. 'Oh Mr. Wordsworth,' she said, to bring him in, 'isn't Mr. Moore amusing?' 'Yes,' said Wordsworth sedately, 'very amusing. Very amusing indeed. I can't remember but once in my life saying a very amusing thing.' The lady clapped her hands for attention. 'Listen everybody! Mr. Wordsworth is going to tell us the most amusing thing he ever said in his life.' Mr. Moore checked his flow, and the circle re-formed round Mr. Wordsworth. *Conticuere omnes*. Then he began: 'I was walking near Grasmere, when I met a salesman who seemed in a state of some perturbation, hurrying along and looking from side to side. Seeing me, he stopped, and asked if I had seen his wife. "My good man," I answered, "I didn't even know that you *had* a wife." That was the only very amusing thing I ever said.'

Gosse had a good story of Browning at a men's dinner given in his honour, at which the only guest without any

claim to distinction was a young gentleman whom no one had ever seen or heard of. When the party moved upstairs, it was perceived with consternation that this whipper-snapper had manœuvred the poet into a position behind the grand pianoforte, from which there seemed no escape. How was he to be rescued? Browning himself solved the difficulty. 'But I'm monopolizing you,' he said, laying on the youth's shoulder a friendly hand which left him no choice but to yield the pass.

I think no one has attempted to coin the word *Browningianum*, and far be it from me to do such a thing myself; but here is another. There was a family with which Browning was in the habit of dining once a week when he was in town, and this family possessed a large stock of the *very* best port wine in the world, and this port wine was kept sacrosanct for the evenings when he was expected. But all things have an end, and at long last the family perceived that the time was come when they must fall back on the second-best port wine in the world. This, after diligent consultation with the wine-merchants, was ascertained and procured; the critical day came, the poet's glass was filled; the family, white-lipped with apprehension, waited for him to speak. He spoke; and what he said was: 'That's a very good glass of port wine.' Their relief was mingled with other feelings, for it was the first time in all those years that he had made any remark whatever on his liquor.

Gosse handed down from Browning's lips an incident of another dinner-party. The guests were assembled round the fire at the end of the room, most of which was occupied by an unusually large table. The butler threw open the door to announce *Mr. Alfred Austin*. 'And I give you my word of honour,' said Browning, '*nothing whatever* came into the room.' A moment later the tiny form of the future Poet Laureate was seen to be trotting round the edge of the table, which was just on a level with the top of his head.

'Whom shall I enounce?' asks the servant in Thackeray.



Another remarkable 'enunciation' was witnessed by Gosse himself. The door was thrown open (as above), and to the general surprise the butler shouted the words: 'Damn says he, Curse says he, and his little boy.' A portly Indian entered unaccompanied—he was the celebrated Sir Jamsetjee Cursetjee Jejeebhoy.

Gosse once told me that in his early days he had been commissioned by the family to write a life of the great potter, Sir Henry Doulton. The odd thing is that there seems to be no trace of such a book, which no one has ever heard of; so I think it must have been published without author's name. At any rate, I am quite sure of the story, the point of which was the difficulty of writing biography under the censorship of relations—a difficulty which he was to experience far more acutely in his dealings with Miss Isabel Swinburne. In the Doulton case, his material was, to his mind, dreary in the extreme: like Simonides writing the Athlete's Pæan,

Il trouva son sujet plein de détails tout nus.

The only point at which he saw a chance of getting any life into it was the description of a visit to the gallant old boy at his home, and he started with gusto: 'Sir Henry received his guests with vociferous hospitality.' The Misses Doulton returned his manuscript with 'vociferous' corrected to 'kind.'

He had two minor literary rumpuses in which he came off better than in the Churton Collins affair. One was with Professor Skeat, who tried hard to engage him in a controversy, and wrote a series of letters, I think to the *Athenaeum*, attacking him with acerbity on some small point. Gosse refused to be drawn, and one fine morning he got a post-card: 'What? Not one kind word? W.W.S.' His other assailant was, if I remember right, the redoubtable Dr. Furnivall, who was subsequently seized with remorse, and told his victim that in the darkness of the night the words

'JUSTICE TO GOSSE' had appeared on his bedroom wall in letters of fire.

Two more scraps: a fragment of conversation which he overheard on the crowded staircase at a rout of Mrs. Humphry Ward's, one member of the Intelligentsia saying to another 'Mais où avez-vous donc vécu?' (I implore the printer, however well he may know French, and even against his better judgement, to leave this '*vécu*' its cedilla—otherwise all is lost). And his son Philip's name for the Princess Said Tussoun, who rented the garage of their house in the Regent's Park: Princess Sorry-she-spoke.

Wilfrid Blunt used to say that you could put ten per cent on to any story by making its leading figure a Bishop. I can't take this advantage here, for both my next items are already about Bishops. One was Ellicott of Gloucester, who made friends with Gosse on a holiday abroad, and delighted him beyond measure by describing him as 'a man of remarkable concinnity of mind.' This is the kind of praise that blesses both him who gives and him who takes. The other Bishop was the great Stubbs, who in company with four strapping sons on a walking-tour slept the night at an inn where Gosse was staying in some remote part of France. Next morning the landlady came to Gosse with an air of concern. 'Pardon monsieur—that gentleman who was here last night—those four young men—is it true that they are his sons?' Gosse told her they were. 'Oh monsieur!' cried the devout old thing, '*un évêque! quel cynisme!*' The same old lady, who seemed never to have heard of the Tower of Babel, was astonished to learn that the English didn't speak French—what then in Heaven's name did they speak? She concluded that they talked *patois*.

This brings me to the kindred question of the language spoken by Gosse's brother-in-law Alma Tadema, then a rich and fashionable painter, renowned for the depiction of marble—where is that marble now? His English, French

and German were all equally deplorable, but he brought his family up in the belief that he was a master of his native tongue, which was Dutch. In an evil hour he took them to Holland for a holiday, went into a shop to make a purchase in Dutch, and was answered by the shopman in English.

*'Ride a cock-horse*

*To Banbury Cross*

*To see a fine lady a-dining with Gosse'.*

*(traditional)*

Faithful to his task of honest chronicler, Gosse's biographer has revealed to the public what was well known to his intimates, that he was no Silver Churn to the magnet of Rank; so it isn't unkind to give a comical instance of this venial failing. Walking one day with him in St. James's Square, I became conscious that some preoccupation was hindering him from giving me the whole of his mind, and looking up I perceived a few yards ahead the stately form of Lord Ribblesdale. Gosse hummed and hawed for a few moments more, and then without any form of leave-taking darted off at his odd little run and took his place beside the Peer. If I had been E. M. Delafield's Miss Delmege, I should have thought it 'rather strange'; and so, in fact, I did.

Before coming to the sad story of the little explosion which broke our friendship for a time and permanently disbloomed it, I should like to record a compliment paid me by his unconscious self:—

'I had last night this idiotic dream:

I was in a large room with a number of persons, none of whom I knew, and who were all silent.

You came in, and you said to me: 'Forty people, and all playing the Bevan game.'

I asked: 'What is the Bevan game?'

You said: 'Don't you know? When you are bored, you can't spell Bevan.'

I replied: 'But I can. B-e-v-a-n.'

You said: 'Oh yes, you can now, because *I* am come, and so you are no longer bored.

E. G.'

The Birnam Hotel,  
Birnam,  
Perthshire.

One lamentable evening I met the Gosses at a fairly large dinner-party, and took-in Mrs. Gosse. I talked to her till half-way through, and then, in accordance with the quaint but highly practical convention by which at a given moment the couples turn simultaneously, like a Venetian blind, to their other neighbours,\* I devoted myself for the rest of dinner to my second string. When the ladies left us, I said something across the table to Gosse, and at once perceived with astonishment that he was in a towering passion. White with anger, he made three ugly faces at me, and finally hissed the word 'Beast' like a serpent. I had no idea what I had done to provoke this, and when we went upstairs I took the first opportunity of asking my hostess if she knew how I had offended Gosse. 'Yes, I should think I did,' she told me; 'he looked across the table and saw that nobody was talking to Nellie.' There seemed nothing to be done, but when the party broke up I went to him and said: 'We *must* part friends.' 'No we won't,' he snapped, refusing my hand, and rushing out of the room.

The only thing to make me think I must have been somehow in the wrong is that Mrs. Gosse, who was usually the very Spirit of Conciliation, took so far as I knew no part in the peace-effort which was immediately set on foot. After a time I was given to understand that Gosse was prepared to forgive me, but that wouldn't quite do; for if I let him

\* The arrangement didn't invariably work—I was once myself driven, after a long spell of isolation, to say to my neighbour: 'Do you mind if I *look* as if I were talking to you?'

forgive me without my being allowed to forgive *him*, he would be in a position at any future time to pull my nose in public whenever he thought fit. Negotiations were continued, and in the end it was agreed that the forgiveness should be bilateral, so we reverted to terms of amity for the rest of his life; but 'it was not then as it had been before', we never quite regained the old affectionate, unquestioning intimacy.

To end on a happier note, I have kept for the last my deep gratitude to him, not only for our long and delightful friendship, but for the interest he took in my *Georgian Poetry* venture and the great help and encouragement he gave me, going so far as to say in print that in the history of English Literature I had won myself a place by the side of Tottel.\*

## 3

## HENRY JAMES

The first time I met Henry James was at one of Edmund Gosse's grander dinner-parties in Delamere Terrace. When the ladies went upstairs, I was left sitting next him, and with inward tremors on my part a perfunctory conversation began. Gradually his eye lightened, and after a pause he went on in a warmer tone (what he says must be imagined with a punctuation of hesitant 'm-m's' and the accompaniment of a regular beat of his hand on the table, like a muffled minute-drum). 'I wonder,' he said, 'if you would mind my asking what might seem, on so slight an acquaintance, m—m— a rather personal question.' I begged him to ask me anything he liked. 'How good of you! Then if you will

\* In case anyone has forgotten, or even never known, who Tottel was, I may remind or inform them that he published in 1557 the first Miscellany of English verse, introducing the poems of Wyatt, Surrey, and other precursors of the Elizabethans.

forgive me for being so inquisitive, I *should* very much like to know—m—m—m—how long it is since you left Cambridge.’ I thought this hardly warranted the compunction of his preamble, but I answered by the book—eighteen months, or whatever it was. ‘Ah yes,’ he said, ‘just so, just so. But that wasn’t—m—quite what I wanted to get—m—at. Upon my word, it seems an unpardonable intrusion, meeting you for the first time, to put such an intimate question—but—what I really want to know is—m—m—m—m—what is your age?’ I told him the truth—twenty-four, I think it was; and he turned his full beam on me. ‘Just so, just so,’ he said again, ‘but you look so delightfully young. But what an advantage that is, to combine the . . . appearance of juvenility with the . . . experience of maturity—in a word’ (putting his hand on my shoulder, and in a tone of jubilation) ‘the Flower of Youth with the Fruits of Time!’

Our second meeting was also at the Gosses’, on the occasion of their annual New Year’s Eve party. After seasonable refreshment downstairs, the guests would be led to a not very large room at the top of the house for some form of entertainment—usually quite a good one, but this time our hosts had made an unlucky choice; and the literary lights of London, packed like figs in a box, observed with languor the performance of some third-rate marionettes. After a while Mr. James, who was standing beside me, squeezed against a wall, turned to me with a malicious gleam in his eye. ‘An interesting example, my dear Marsh, of Economy—Economy of Means—and—and—and——’ (with an outburst) ‘Economy of *Effect*!’

At about this time I told him I was going on a first visit to Paris, and he warned me against a possible disappointment in terms which were a choice example of what Mr. Flosky in *Nightmare Abbey* might have called his hyperoxysophistical paradoxology. ‘Do not,’ he said, ‘allow yourself to be “put off” by the superficial and external aspect of Paris; or rather

(for the *true* superficial and external aspect of Paris has a considerable fascination) by what I may call the superficial and external aspect *of* the superficial and external aspect of Paris.' This was surely carrying lucidity to dazzling-point; I did my best to profit by it, but I couldn't be sure that I was exercising exactly the right discrimination, and in the end I surrendered to the charm of Paris without too much circumspection.

I never saw him at all regularly, but our occasional meetings were always a delight, even though his earnestness in matters of detail was sometimes an embarrassment. Once we left a dinner-party together, and after walking a little way hailed a hansom, in which I sat, while he stood for several minutes on the footboard discussing with the cabman the route which would best meet our dual needs. In vain I murmured from within: 'Oh, Mr. James, do tell him the Reform Club, and I'll go on from there'; still he unrolled his mental map of London, hatching alternative itineraries. On another occasion we were walking and talking down Pall Mall, when for some special emphasis he turned half-left, pulling me round half-right to face him, and fixed me to the spot, with a hand on each shoulder, while we stood like a Siamese lighthouse amid the surge of pedestrians, and he tracked the *mot juste* through the maze of his large vocabulary.

Almost always I carried away something deliciously characteristic which has stuck in my memory ever since; some of my best treasures I cannot print, lest I wring withers; for though the kindest of men, he never hid the workings of his critical sense, and I am writing on the principle ascribed to Crabbe by the authors of *Rejected Addresses*, 'never to say anything which could give pain, however slight, to any individual, however wicked or foolish.' But here are one or two which I hope are anodyne.

Lady Arthur Russell, while her husband was alive, had regularly given parties on Tuesday evenings at her house in

Audley Square. Henry James was one of the *habitués*, and he enjoyed going to see her on other days too, though he had been known to remark on the difficulty of making conversation 'under the eyes of that long row of silent, observant children'. When these same children grew up, the 'Tuesdays' were revived, partly for their friends, and partly for the survivors from the old days. I met him there on his first appearance, and he stood beside me, surveying the guests with 'no unpleasing melancholy'. 'It's a strange experience,' he said, 'to come back after all these years to the scene of so many memories—to find a few of the old familiar figures retired in the background, and the foreground filled with a mass of the portentous young, of whom, my dear Marsh,' (and here came the beam of eye and voice) 'you are one.' I think it was to Lady Arthur, who had asked him if he knew the names of women's clothes, that he answered: 'I know a bertha—and a spencer—and a ruff.'

He gave me a depressing account of Holman Hunt's conversation, which he likened to a trickle of tepid water from a tap one is unable to turn off. 'There must be some way,' he said, 'one could do *so*, or *so*, or *so*' (imitating the gesture of turning a tap this way and that), 'but no, nothing will stop it, on it goes. Once I had occasion to visit an obscure street in Chelsea, and after trying for some time to find it, in an evil hour' (here his voice became sinister) 'I met Holman Hunt, who professed knowledge of it and offered to guide me. And for two mortal hours we wandered through the byways of Chelsea, while he talked on and on and on. He chose the not unattractive subject of Ruskin's marriage; but even that topic, which might in other hands have been alluring, proved in his not otherwise than DULL.'

Two more tiny scraps: his reply, at a fabulous dinner of all the *sommités* in all the American worlds, given in his honour during his celebrated visit to New York, to a guest



who gushed at him: 'Isn't this an interesting occasion, Mr. James?' 'Abysmally so, dear lady'; and his pensive answer to someone who asked what he supposed George Eliot's husband, J. W. Cross, to have felt when she died: 'Regret . . . remorse . . . RELIEF.'

In later years we were brought closer together by our common friendship with Rupert Brooke, for whom he had a strong admiration and affection. They met first at Cambridge, whither he had at long last been lured by repeated invitations from a small group of unknown admirers. He came back slightly disappointed in his hosts, but full of the young Apollo who had casually shone-in upon what he had evidently thought their rather dingy *milieu*. This was not long before Rupert's departure for America, and they cannot have seen much of each other; but I remember going with Rupert to luncheon with him in his Chelsea flat and realizing what a genuine relation had sprung up between the older and the younger man.

Percy Lubbock published in his Edition of the *Letters* five from Henry James to me on Rupert's war-sonnets and his death. They are a far finer tribute than the desperately obscure and tortuous preface which in the goodness of his heart he wrote (I believe it was the last work he published) for my edition of Rupert's *Letters from America*; and as I daresay the collection is now not widely read, I should like to print here\* the one he sent me the day after Rupert's death.

'21 Carlyle Mansions,

'Cheyne Walk, S.W.

'April 24th, 1915.

'MY DEAR DEAR EDDIE,—

'This is too horrible and heart-breaking. If there was a stupid and hideous disfigurement of life and outrage to beauty left for our awful conditions to perpetrate, those things have been now supremely achieved, and

\* By kind permission of Messrs. Macmillan.

no other brutal blow in the private sphere can better them for making one just stare through one's tears. One had thought of one's self as advised and stiffened as to what was possible, but one sees (or at least I feel) how sneakingly one had clung to the idea of the happy, the favouring, hazard, the dream of what still might be for the days to come. But why do I speak of my pang, as if it had a right to breathe in presence of yours?—which makes me think of you with the last tenderness of understanding. I value extraordinarily having seen him here in the happiest way (in Downing St., &c.) two or three times before he left England, and I measure by that the treasure of your own memories and the dead weight of your own loss. What a price and a refinement of beauty and poetry it gives to those splendid sonnets—which will enrich our whole collective consciousness. We must speak further and better, but meanwhile all my impulse is to tell you to entertain the pang and taste the bitterness for all they are “worth”—to know to the fullest extent what has happened to you and not miss one of the hard ways in which it will come home. You won't have again any relation of that beauty, won't know again that mixture of the elements that made him. And he was the breathing beneficent man—and now turned to this! But there's something to keep too—his legend and his image will hold. Believe by how much I am, my dear Eddie, more than ever yours,

‘HENRY JAMES.’

I am glad to think that in his last days I was able to do him a little service.

‘How could it happen, you will say,  
A Lion could require a Rat  
To aid him? Yet it came to that.’\*

\* La Fontaine, *Le Lion et le Rat* (my translation).

When Winston Churchill left the Government in 1915 and went to command a regiment in France, Mr. Asquith lifted me off the beach into his Private Office, where I am afraid I was something of a fifth wheel on the coach; but anyhow, I did score two small successes. The first, which I mention from pure vanity, was when the Prime Minister had to give an address at the Memorial Service to Captain Scott in St. Paul's Cathedral. He was far too much entangled in pressing work to write it all himself, so he asked me to make him a suggestion. I did my best, and when the time came he actually delivered my speech, with little alteration. Next day a letter came from a lady in the country, who said she always read and admired his speeches, and pasted most of them into a book, but this was by far the best he had ever made. 'The applause of a single human being,' as Dr. Johnson said, 'is of great consequence.'

My other triumph, in which Henry James was involved (at least I hope it was mine), was of greater importance. When he became naturalized as a British subject towards the end of 1915, Mr. Asquith told me he was thinking of recommending him for the Order of Merit, and I expressed my intense pleasure at the thought. A little later, he said he was doubtful whether he could bring it off, as John Morley was opposed to it; but he asked me to write him a minute in support. What Lord Morley's reasons precisely were, I never knew; but I gathered that the novels did not appeal to him because they dealt too exclusively with the inconsequential doings of the Idle Rich, and were therefore not what the Americans would call 'worth while.' (It is amusing to compare and contrast this view with that of Stephen Spender, who in order to reconcile his admiration of them to his conscience wrote a book to prove that the author was a crypto-communist.)

However that may be, I set to work and produced what I thought a cogent plea. I never heard whether or not it

played any part in the result; but at any rate the honour *was* conferred, when my old friend lay on his death-bed; and I was told at the time that he had not been too far gone to take pleasure in it.

## CHAPTER VI

### OFFICE DESK

'Trades and Professions'—these are themes the Muse,  
Left to her freedom, would forbear to choose.

CRABBE, *The Borough*.

To sit in hateful Office here confin'd,

SIN in *Paradise Lost*.

Colonial Office—Oliver Howard—Lord and Lady Carlisle—  
Conrad Russell—The Arthur Russells—Bernard Holland.

I WAS second in the Civil Service examination, which was not so bad, especially considering that my vanquisher, Fred Perry, had taken twelve 'subjects' to my eight, so that I could tell myself it was a victory of quantity over quality; and it was another feather in that now antiquated cap that the future Lord Bradbury, who was to add his name to the language was third. Character told, too, in the medical test, when I was confronted with several skeins of wool, and told to pick out an orange one. Was I colour-blind after all? Should I make a shot, or tell the truth? I took the braver course. 'There isn't an orange one.' The examiner looked at the skeins for himself. 'So there isn't,' he said; and my heart beat again.

I started work in the Colonial Office in the autumn of 1896, very soon after my mother's death, as a 'junior' in the Australian Department under John Anderson (later Sir John, and Governor of Ceylon—not to be confused with the Sir John Anderson of to-day, also, if I may use the expression, my jo John, till he soared up from the Home Office and Ireland to govern Bengal, and now to manipulate the Privy Seal).

He was a lovable man, very Scotch, and a most efficacious and encouraging trainer in the drafting of dispatches and all the other chores of a budding clerk. Of my first four years I can think of nothing whatever to relate, except perhaps a crusade which I was moved to undertake on behalf of a policeman in Fiji called Ensor, who I thought, probably quite wrongly, had been maltreated by the Governor, Sir John Thurston. I espoused his cause with ardour, and managed to put through a series of controversial dispatches. Poor Sir John! 'All his demurs but doubled my attacks,' and *in mediis rebus* he died. My clever senior, A. E. Collins, whom I had known at Trinity, celebrated the event in verse:

'Who killed Sir John Thurston?  
I, answered Marsh,  
With my language so harsh—  
I killed Sir John Thurston.'

I hoped I hadn't really.

Some time in 1900 I was moved up to be Assistant Private Secretary to the great Mr. Chamberlain, but of him, alas, I have nothing to record. No one could have been kinder to a fly on the wheel, but he transacted business entirely with my principals—first Ampthill, then Monk Bretton—and I saw little of him. It was to my single eyeglass that I owed a flattering quid-pro-quo; one morning as I was going into the Office a stranger put himself in my path and said in a respectful tone: 'Excuse me, Sir, but I'm a Birmingham man myself.'

My special duty, apart from such things as opening letters and answering the less important ones, was a curious feature of an old order which has entirely passed away. The juvenile Assistant Private Secretary sat in a back room with an unpaid colleague of about his own age, and made (subject

to the Minister's assent, which was seldom withheld) *all* the new appointments to the Colonial Service! There were four large leather volumes, labelled Administrative, Legal, Medical, and T.A.C., meaning 'Treasury, Audit, and Customs,' in which we entered the names, qualifications and credentials of the candidates (colloquially 'cands'), in these several spheres; we interviewed them at length, and took careful notes of what we called the 'impression' they made; and when a vacancy arose we went diligently through them all, and (of course, in legal appointments, with the help of the Legal Adviser) made our submission, which as I said was usually approved. My unpaid colleagues, first Oliver Howard and then Conrad Russell, were good judges of men; we took immense pains, and had a great sense of responsibility; I don't think we made many mistakes, and I shouldn't wonder if the system worked as well as another. But it was certainly not in accordance with modern taste; towards the end of my time Lord Lugard insisted on co-operating with us in the choice of men for Nigeria, in which he naturally took the lead; and soon afterwards a proper Appointments Board took over the job and ran it in an up-to-date manner.

In the humbler province of letter-opening there was one beauty-spot. We do well nowadays not to laugh at the mad; but one of our correspondents was a lunatic so engaging that she would have drawn a smile from a Peabody, and we couldn't find it in our hearts to bury her missives away in what was known as the 'lunatic bundle'. She had set her face against Armenian Atrocities, which she traced in the most unlikely quarters; and I still have a picture-postcard representing a hillside entirely covered with trees, which she had entitled 'Armenian Sunday-school Hidden by Foliage.' Another work of art was a little engraving of a dragon, which she had coloured all over with bright Prussian Blue, and written underneath:

'My Dragon's so blue,  
 My Dragon's so blue,  
 I never expected a Dragon so blue!'

But her speciality was drawing-out plans for the New Jerusalem, with a particular eye to the accommodation assigned by Providence to the Royal Family. Somehow or other she had access to a prodigious stock of wall-paper samples, which she sent to the Colonial Office in large packages, indicating on the back the room in the Heavenly Mansions to which each one was destined: Queen Mary's Boudoir, King Edward's Study, and so on. She must have read the newspapers, for from the day of Mr. Chamberlain's resignation we heard from her no more.

My first colleague, Oliver Howard, who was a younger son of George Lord Carlisle, was a romantic being, difficult to place in the twentieth century. Very elegant and aristocratic, with dark hair and a dark little flourish of a moustache (which he soon shaved off), splendid beryl eyes in a finely-modelled face, a slow, sleepy, very articulate and somehow Southern voice (he would pronounce the little words as they are spelt, 'a' to rhyme with 'day', 'of' with 'doff', etc.), vivacious courage and a flint-lock temper; placable, but also capable of cold anger and lasting contempt—he would have done very well in the sixteenth century as an Elizabethan courtier-soldier or an hidalgo (in some ways the thought of him reminds me of R. B. Cunninghame-Graham); in the seventeenth, as a Cavalier or a Frondeur, in the eighteenth probably best as a high-bred pirate. It was lucky that I got on the right side of him at once, as I don't think I could ever have stood up to him; but as it was, he was the most delightful companion, and though we had nothing in common on the intellectual side (he read very little, and



never looked at a picture unless it was an heirloom), whenever there was break in the flow of 'cands' we had thrilling conversations about people and things in general.

He went on with my education, begun by George Grahame, in man-of-the-worldliness, in which there were still gaps; for instance, I had never noticed that only the scum of the earth pronounced 'valet' as a French word, or known that Harewood spelt Harwood; but the drawing of Oliver's breath through his teeth was enough to prevent a second fall.

He had a passion for pedigrees, and had made one for himself in a book called *Ancestral Tablets*, ingeniously devised so that if one could discover one's sixty-four great-great-great-great-grandparents, one could exhibit them practically at a glance; and he was now extending his researches to the 128 of the generation before, and even farther back. I have always been highly infectible with the tastes and fads of my friends, and sometimes the results have been excellent, and to me important; but this of Oliver's led me into a frightful waste of time. I could hardly make 'Tablets' for myself, because although I found that on my mother's side I should have done fairly well with the Prime Minister, Charlotte de la Trémoille, Lord Burghley and Henry VII, to say nothing of King Brian Boru, my father's would have been almost a blank; so what must I do but start on a set for Neville Lytton's little boy Anthony, who certainly provided excellent material—his four grandparents being Robert Lytton, Edith Villiers, Wilfrid Blunt and Lady Anne King-Noel, daughter of Byron's Ada. It is painful to think of the hours I spent at the London Library, ferreting in Extinct Peerages and County Histories; and my only discovery of the faintest interest was that Wilfrid Blunt could call cousins with Shelley through a common Sussex ancestress. In the end, when I had far more notes than I could ever find patience to formulate, Reason resumed her sway, and the whole thing petered out; however, it was great fun while it



OLIVER HOWARD

*From a drawing by Neville Lytton*



lasted, Oliver cheering me on, and nearly as much pleased as I was when I bagged an Oliver Cromwell or a Charles II.

Oliver was a first cousin of Bertrand Russell's through their mothers, who were both Stanleys of Alderley, so I knew a good many of his relations already and had heard much of the others. Lord Carlisle was the finest flower of cultivation, humorous and very gentle, with all Oliver's distinction, but without (in my time) any of his fire. He looked like a Hebrew Prophet—so much so that another of his sons, Geoffrey, was once asked in the House of Commons, 'Who's that palpable old Semite in the Peers' Gallery?' though Oliver and I searched the Ancestral Tablets in vain for any possible anthropological explanation of this appearance. I think he would have been a good painter if he had had to work for his living—it was amusing years afterwards, in his grand-daughter Winifred Nicholson's house, to see his tasteful and correct but rather weak Italian landscapes interspersed among her own and her husband Ben's paintings in the most dashing modern manner. He was a teetotaller, and when he came to dine with me in Gray's Inn, I asked Oliver beforehand what I should give him to drink. 'Kops Ale,' said Oliver, in his most sphinx-like voice. I shall never know for certain if he was pulling my leg or not, but when in an impassive tone the Colonial Office Messenger whom I had got in to wait at dinner offered 'Kops Ale, my lord,' I noticed or fancied a tinge of surprise in the old gentleman's gracious acknowledgement of the lengths I had gone in catering for his taste. When in my turn I dined with him in his Philip Webb house in Kensington Palace Gardens, I'm afraid I didn't behave nearly so well. I did think there might have been a little reciprocity, and when a parlourmaid murmured 'Lemonade, ginger-ale or ginger-beer, sir?' I answered with asperity 'whichever you please.'

Lady Carlisle, who was a very able woman, was celebrated for her imperious and vehement disposition. She and Oliver were at variance, and I only met her two or three times, long after his death. She would never let her boys go to school, and the whole family had been brought up at home, with tutors and governesses. Oliver put a problem to me: in what circumstances should a Frenchwoman speak of herself in the masculine gender? I gave it up, and he told me of a clever governess who had had occasion to say: 'Je serais furieuse si j'étais Lord Carlisle.' The quick-witted children had immediately pointed out to her that if she were Lord Carlisle she would be masculine, and should therefore have said: 'Je serais furieux.' One of the tutors had given her Ladyship cause for anger, and she described the method she had taken with him: 'I talked to him till he fainted. I waited till he came to, and then I went on talking to him.'

It wasn't till long after the time of which I am writing that I stayed at Castle Howard with Oliver's brother Geoffrey. He told me that as a young man Willy Peel had been there a great deal, and been fond of pretending to be the guide and showing the sights to the tourists. At one point in the round there was a right-turn leading to the sculpture-gallery, and when this was reached he was in the habit of saying: 'Here—is a statue of Ceres; and there—is a series of statues.'

Oliver wasn't long for London. Like a very different Thyrasis,

It irked him to be here; he could not rest,

and after a while he went out as an Assistant District Commissioner to Nigeria, where in a very few years he died, leaving no one quite like him in the world.

I was no less lucky in his successor, Conrad Russell, who

had been one of the 'silent observant children' I mentioned when I spoke of Henry James's visits to Lady Arthur Russell. He also was a cousin of Bertrand Russell's, so I knew much more about him and his family than he did about me, and at the beginning he was rather constrained and reserved; but this was a brief phase, which he referred to afterwards as 'the time before we began telling each other what we had done the night before'—a good definition of a stage in intimacy (though not so subtle as the Baring expression for a stage in a love-affair, '*er schickt ihr Bücher*'). I felt complimented when later on he said: 'I'm the only person who knows him well enough to call him Marsh' (which of course he seldom did).

Conrad was tall, fair, and extremely good-looking, and his character matched his appearance. Although his judgement was keenly critical, his temper was incomparably selfless and benign; and if I were making a list of 'Sayings that have Influenced Me' I should have to cite a casual remark of his—very insignificant it may sound, but it was one of those moral commonplaces which strike with a new and illuminating force when they are spoken by someone of whose whole being they are the natural outcome. 'I think,' he said, 'that one's first duty is to make life as pleasant as one can for the people one is thrown with.'

Saint-Simon says that the family to which Mme. de Montespan belonged had a peculiar turn of phrase and humour which was known throughout Versailles as '*le tour des Mortemart*'. The Arthur Russells were in most other respects exceedingly unlike Mme. de Montespan and her relations, but they certainly had a *tour* of their own, different in each one but unmistakably akin. They all had excellently clear and musical voices, and spoke slowly and with a marked emphasis. The eldest, Harold, had a knack of occasional verse: I remember a piece on the engagement of

an English lady to a foreigner by the name of Merino, every stanza of which contained a line on the pattern of:

'Nearer and nearer, lo! Merino draws . . .  
Now for the happy day Merino pants . . .  
And all his hopes in her Merino vests.'

He once wrote recommending me to employ a certain firm of fullers, and enclosing an order-form they had innocently sent him in the course of business, in which he had filled up a blank:

*Estimate for cleaning:* face, hands and feet.

He wrote wittily, and there was an article of his in *The Spectator* on 'Jocularities' ('How goes the enemy?' and so forth) in which he anticipated by many years the epoch-making attack on 'Bromides' which enriched the language with a new locution and drove a number of exasperating old ones outside the pale.

His brother Claud had to pack for himself after a country visit, and got into difficulties. 'It's astonishing,' he said, 'how much more room dirty clothes take than clean ones—quite out of proportion to the amount of dirt.' (By the way, Wilfrid Blunt had a servant whose genius for packing was its own frustration. He packed so well, and so much, that nobody else could ever get half the things back into the bag, so David had to be forbidden to pack at all.)

Another brother, Gilbert, was discussing the topic of Money with the Aga Khan, who was led by the course of the conversation to say: 'I suppose a thousand pounds to me is about the same as sixpence to you.' Gilbert had the presence of mind to take a half-crown out of his pocket and say 'Would you mind giving me change for this?' He is fond of what used to be called 'quizzing', and when he met me soon after my retirement he asked in his most sententious

tone: 'Tell me, Eddie, do you find that since you've been knighted you get asked to dine at a better class of house than before?'

One of his finds was the story of a German student struggling with the pronunciation of English and giving it up in despair on reading in a newspaper that '*The Mikado* was pronounced a great success.' And he told me of his visit to a party of African Pygmies who had been brought to London and gave a private performance. They entered their little arena and stamped about ecstatically, brandishing their tiny spears, while an old Pygmy squatted at the side and watched them with sarcastic grunts. Gilbert asked their guardian the meaning of the scene, and learnt that the young braves were shouting: 'This would be a very good place for an encampment,' and the old man saying, 'Yes; but any other place would do just as well.'

Conrad himself was a believer in Dr. Johnson's advice to 'clear your mind of cant'. 'What's all this about the Simple Life?' he asked. 'What is simple for some people might not be simple for others. If I took to travelling third and living on vegetables, it would make my life *much* more complicated.' He was fond of pricking little bubbles. We were debating why it was that I took so much more pleasure in general society than he did, and I incautiously advised him to drink champagne at dinner-parties, 'because it makes one more amusing.' 'It only makes you *think* you're more amusing,' was his grave reply, 'severe in youthful beauty'; and when I said he would enjoy balls more if he danced, he answered: 'You can't think how funny you look, flying round and round the room like that.' Musing upon the Latin declensions, he came out with 'What a language! in which one can say either *bobus* or *bubus* to mean either by, with, to, or from, oxen.'

We went for a great many walking-tours together, in Normandy, Provence, Tyrol, the Apennines, Tuscany, Umbria, and the Pyrenees, and though he cared nothing



for pictures, which were already rather 'my thing', I never had an easier or more entertaining fellow-tourist; and he was improving too, as he knew much more about history and foreign politics than I did.

We stopped at a French inn for luncheon, and I asked the landlady what she could give us. '*De la truite*,' I thought she said, 'and blest my maw, destin'd to that good hour.' When she went to the kitchen Conrad asked in his slow voice: 'What made you order tripe?' *E*: 'I didn't, it's trout.' *C*: 'No—she distinctly said '*de la tripe*.' *E*: 'Good Lord! then why didn't you stop me?' *C*: 'Because I thought, from the light that came into your eyes, that tripe must be your favourite dish, and it would be unkind to interfere.' Once I went up in the air over the stupidity of an Italian stable-boy who had spoilt our day with false information and wrong advice. 'If he had the gumption of an owl! . . .' I exclaimed. 'But he hasn't,' said Conrad dreamily; 'he has every quality of an owl, *except* its gumption.'

On a walk nearer home, at Shere, where the Russells lived at the Ridgeway: 'Do you see that house?' he asked me. 'That's where burning Rosamund Marriott-Watson lived and sung.' (This was a writer whose love-poems were well known in the nineties.)

He went to Belgrade in October 1904, the year after the barbarous assassination of King Alexander and Queen Draga, and wrote me a letter which makes a nasty little footnote to Balkan history. 'No more plots are anticipated here, the family of Obrenovitch having been wiped off the face of the earth. King Peter sits firmly on the throne. "Wir sind ganz zufrieden mit ihm"' (we are quite satisfied with him), the porter here assures me. Gilbert hazarded the suggestion to this same man that it must have been exciting here at the time of the late K. and Q.'s murder. He stared at us with pitying contempt. 'Ach bitte sehr,' he said, 'das war nix, aber gar nix. Um halb eins wurde ein biszchen geschossen und dann gesungen und



CONRAD RUSSELL

*From a drawing by Neville Lytton*



gemusiziert—aber bitte meine Herren, das war eigentlich gar nix.\*

Conrad had been brought into the Colonial Office by his cousin Amphill, who, as I said, was Mr. Chamberlain's Chief Private Secretary. His father had been Lord Odo Russell, whose unusual Christian name sometimes caused confusion. He was yachting in the Mediterranean, and an Admiral uncle of his, who was in command of the Squadron, received a puzzling message as he paced his quarterdeck. 'There's a signal from that yacht over there, Sir,' said the man, 'but we can't quite make it out—it says "Your nephew is on board, O do!" but it doesn't say what you're to do.'

One of Lady Arthur's sisters, Isabelle Lady Sligo, had been an extremely pretty girl, and there was a pretty story of her dining soon after she came out at old Lord Stanley of Alderley's, where one of the guests was the Sheridan Duchess of Somerset, by this time an old lady, who had been Queen of Beauty at the Eglinton Tournament in 1839. Mlle. de Peyronnet took it for granted that her host would take the Duchess in to dinner, and was dismayed when he came up to her and offered her his arm. 'You don't think I'm going to take in that old hoo-hoo, do you?' he asked; and she looked in an agony of deprecation at the Duchess, who said with a smile: 'Never mind, my dear—I was Queen of Beauty once.'

I can't leave the Russells without relating how Conrad's two sisters, when they were about to be confirmed, asked a great family friend, the Reverend William Rogers, who was then a very well-known clerical character in London, how

\* It was nothing at all. About half-past twelve there was a spot of shooting, and then some singing and band-playing—but really, gentlemen, it was absolutely nothing at all.

they should dress for the ceremony. He reflected for a moment, and answered: 'As if for the Zoo.'

Mr. Chamberlain resigned in 1903 in the interests of his Tariff proposals, and I couldn't help feeling a little compunction when in saying good-bye and telling me that I was to carry on under his successor Alfred Lyttelton he assured me that there would be 'no change in the policy.' He naturally assumed that I was an adherent; but all my Cambridge friends, and I in their train, were Free Traders of the deepest dye. Years afterwards Winston Churchill heard someone ask me what my politics were, and said: 'I hope Eddie's a modified Winstonian'; but I've always been thankful for the dispensation by which English Civil Servants are not called upon to have politics of their own.

There was a good story at this time about Lord Goschen, who had two elderly maiden relations living or staying with him. The notion of Imperial Preference worked him up to such a pitch that breakfast, luncheon, and dinner were one long invective against the folly and wickedness of it. So insane he made it appear, that the ladies began to wonder how anybody, let alone Mr. Chamberlain, could believe in such an absurdity, and finally one of them asked: 'Is there *nothing* to be said for it?' 'Of course there's something to be said for it,' cried Lord Goschen, going on to construct such a powerful argument for Protection that they could never believe in Free Trade again.

I was very happy under Alfred Lyttelton, whom I knew already 'out of school', so that he was not the remote idol that Mr. Chamberlain had been; but I have no touches worth adding to the generally-accepted picture of his charm and versatile ability. Conrad stayed on, and we had a new chief in Bernard Holland, who was a remarkable figure in every way, very tall, with a great rugged, swarthy aquiline face that would have done for a middle-aged John the

Baptist, but for the humour in his eye. He was a profound student and an original thinker in the science of politics, in religion, and in literature, all of which he combined with a pleasantly soft spot for the world and its *agréments*. When a girl we knew made a love-match in the North, he told me he preferred his friends to marry rich peers with seats in easy reach of London. I wish Max Beerbohm had been there to draw him bending down to help little Mr. Alfred Austin on with his little overcoat.

Early in 1905 Promotion claimed me, and sent me down to toil, as a First Class Clerk, in the bowels of the earth, if such a term can be applied to the basement of the Colonial Office, where the West African Department was at that time installed.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE LYTTONS

Lady Lytton—Mrs. C. W. Earle—Lady Constance—Victor—Sir Edwin Lutyens—Neville—G. F. Watts—Coquelin aîné—Antony—Wilfrid and Lady Anne Blunt

**I**N writing of my last crop of Cambridge friends I named Victor Lytton, saying that he would be heard of again. Before he came up at the beginning of my fourth year, Maurice Baring had recommended us to one another's attention; and I had a further reason for hopeful presentiment in that his grandmother Mrs. Edward Villiers had had an intense though of course entirely decorous friendship with my grandfather Spencer Perceval, and one of my mother's legends had been the beauty and grace of her daughters 'the Twins', who had become Lady Lytton and Lady Loch. All went according to plan, and it wasn't long before I was great friends both with Victor himself and with the whole of his remarkable and delightful family.

Lady Lytton was living in a small house called The Danes at Little Berkhamsted, with her two unmarried daughters, Lady Constance, later to be famous among the heroines of the Suffrage, and Lady Emily, who afterwards married Sir Edwin Lutyens; Victor in the vacations, and Neville, who was still at Eton, in the holidays. She was still very handsome, and although she was not in the least intellectual or even 'clever', the warmth and simplicity of her heart, the grace and dignity of her manners, and I suppose some instinct for high places which she had inherited along with a full measure of the historic Villiers charm (now in its fourth century), had carried her without a stumble over the pitfalls

that yawn for the wife of an Ambassador to Paris and a Viceroy of India, to perfect peace and contentment in a Hertfordshire village.

She was almost exactly like her twin, and I had an amusing proof of this when I took her to the play and Lady Constance Leslie said as she passed us, 'How do you do *dear*, are you Lady Lytton or Lady Loch?'—it was pleasant to see that the enthusiastic *dear* would apply equally to whichever it was. Their elder sister, Mrs. Earle, was very different, short and rather podgy, and certainly not more than 'fairly beautiful', as the Indian soldier said of Queen Victoria's photograph; but with a brilliant, singularly modern mind, a most racy humour, and a boundless generosity of nature, with just that perfecting dash of tartness which saves benevolence from insipidity. I suppose that her volumes of *Potpourri from a Surrey Garden*, full as they were of common sense and fun, and much as everybody loved them at the time, had not quite the quality which keeps the head of a book above the waters of oblivion; but as an English Worthy, if not as a writer, she was memorable. One of her merits was a great love of young people: besides her own kin, she had a legion of supposititious nephews and nieces; and it was a proud day when I was adopted, and given the right to call her 'Aunt T.' to her face.

She and her husband (who died long before I knew her) were both Agnostics, and much exercised as to the attitude towards religion which they should take up in the education of their three little sons; so they laid their doubts before their friend the great Huxley, and were set at ease by his well-weighed pronouncement: 'My dear Mrs. Earle, you should bring the boys up in the mythology of their age and country.' She once took Neville and me to Hampton Court, and having lagged behind found us contemplating the statue of the Hermaphrodite. 'It's no good, dears,' she said with a Rabelaisian chuckle in her rich but always rather plaintive voice, 'you won't see anything.'



She held strong views on hygiene, and vehemently propagated the Haig Diet (a refinement on vegetarianism), which was her weapon against the foul fiend Uric Acid. Did I kick against these pricks, she mournfully warned me of the complete breakdown which was the almost invariable doom of meat-eaters between the ages of forty and fifty; so when I eventually passed this climacteric unscathed, I was glad that I had stood my ground. Another trait was what one of her nephews called her 'glorious contempt for secrecy'; but, as sometimes happens, this seemed rather to attract than to freeze confidences. I don't think harm ever came of her revelations, but it is certain that all her friends were very well posted in one another's insides and love-affairs.

Lady Conny was one of the rare beings. Tall, and what is called 'willowy' to the point of fragility, she had eyes of the true violet, which were the chief beauty of a singularly beautiful countenance, hardly marred by a faint pencilling of hair on her upper lip. If there was a fault in her character, it was the extremity of her unselfishness. Anything there was to be done for anybody, she automatically did; she was disappointed at not being allowed to clean her brothers' bicycles—or mine! And if there was one thing to which she was completely insensitive, it was class-distinction, which had no meaning for her at all. In this she was like her elder sister Lady Betty Balfour, who once rode on the top of an omnibus all the way from Piccadilly Circus to Addison Road, in colloquy with a working-man whose wife had just died, leaving him with a number of small children. Such was the sympathy and wisdom with which she counselled him, that just before she reached her stop he asked her to marry him; and it was with real compunction that she told him this could not be, as she already had a husband and a family to do for. Lady Conny had an omnibus story of her own, from her Paris days. There was only one seat empty, next to hers; and to this, in the exuberance of her helpfulness,

with a beck and a wreathèd smile, she invited a Frenchman who stood looking about for a vacancy. The poor man could scarcely be blamed for misinterpreting her blandishments.

I won her heart on my first visit to The Danes by dint of an absurd remark. She showed me some object, I forget what, telling me I *must* say it was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen in my life, and I answered 'Must-I-why?' all in one word. This had a great success, and became my *leit-motiv* in the family. She had an extravagant sense of the ridiculous, and a laugh I never heard the like of, on a single very high note, sweet and round and clear as one of the twangling instruments on Prospero's island, and going on for a long while. Sometimes it was quite uncontrollable, and once it got the better of her in church, drowning the anthem, and driving her out of the building in shame. One of her joys was a lady at a tea-party, who from shyness took 'the main cake' instead of a slice.

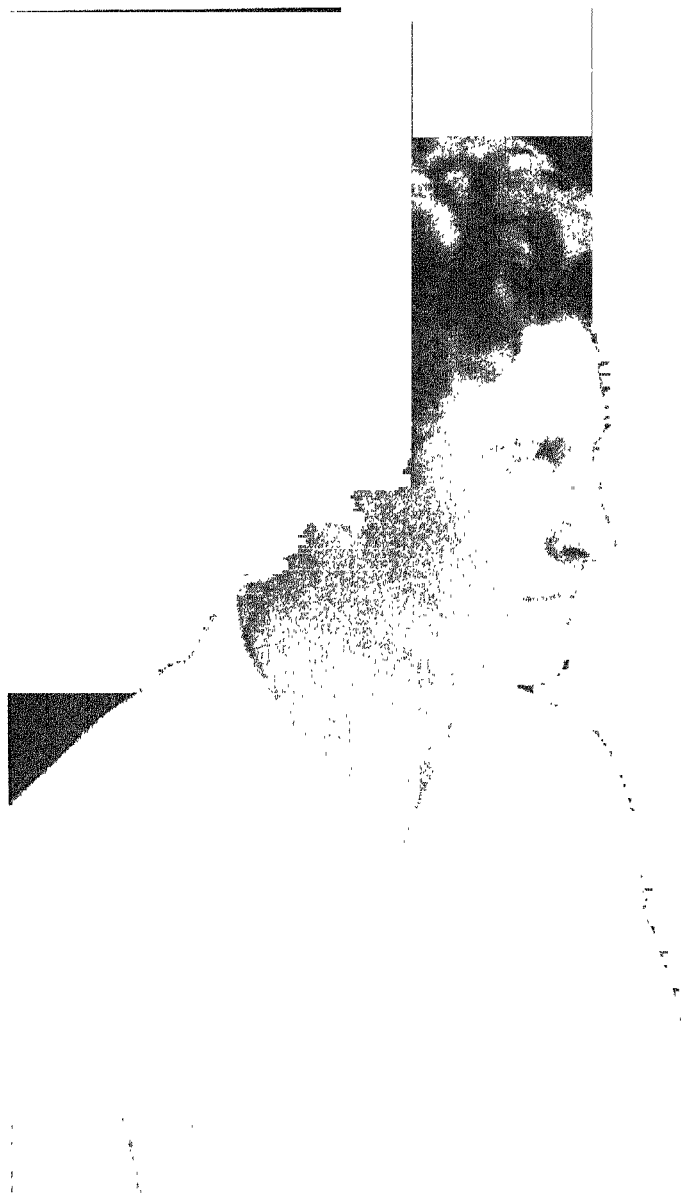
As this is not an eighteenth-century epitaph, I will pass over the fine quality of her mind, and only cite one of the book-reviews which she eked out her pocket-money by contributing to an obscure paper. Her usual method of reviewing she described as 'praising with faint damns'—this one was sudden death: *For parody, read again.* But nobody could commemorate her without speaking of her music, which apart from personal relations was the dearest ingredient of her life. Her piano-playing was out of the ordinary, and the long summer evenings at The Danes when Neville and I sat listening to her Scarlatti and Schumann and Chopin, especially the ballade which we called the Galloping Horse, make one of my most perfect memories.

Her inflexible will and heroic courage found their opportunity in the Suffrage movement. Her friends might deprecate the aims and abhor the methods of the agitation; they might shudder, none the less, at the suffering and humiliation inflicted on so fair a body and spirit; yet they could not but glory in the martyr and the saint.

Victor himself was a young Knight of the Round Table, or one of Milton's Cherubs, Ithuriel or Zephon; already exercising himself for the part in public life to which he seemed destined by his abilities, the tradition of his family, his gifts and graces as a speaker, his rectitude of mind and character—the part perhaps of an Edward Grey, with whom he had much in common. By ill luck the natural time for his entering the lists coincided with the controversy on Tariff Reform. It was unthinkable that he should be anything but a Conservative, and equally out of the question that being a convinced Free Trader he should follow Mr. Balfour on the path of Preference and Protection. In these circumstances his seat in the Lords was rather an obstacle than an advantage, and he never got started on the road which might have led him to the highest places in the Government. But the loss to Cabinets was India's gain, and the gain of the innumerable causes, great and small, but all well-chosen, to which he has devoted his talents and his incredible diligence.

Lady Emily's husband, Ned Lutyens, besides being a famous architect, is a notorious fun-maker. Perhaps his best joke was made in war-time, when he said that he would hate to be delivered over to a red, cross nurse; but he had lisped in comicalities, for he thought as a little boy that the Lord's Prayer began with 'Our Father Charles in heaven, Harold be thy name.'

The younger brother, Neville, was as I have said still at Eton, but under a doom. When he was thirteen or fourteen, he had been clever with his pencil, and Lord Lytton, then Ambassador in Paris, had shown his masterpieces to the then celebrated painter Bonnat, who played up, and pronounced them highly promising. The proud father, delighted to have an artist in the family, determined then and there that Neville should be a painter; and after his death in 1891 this



NEVILLE LYTTON



decision became sacrosanct and unalterable. Meanwhile Neville's mind had turned in other directions; he threw himself into the life of Eton, gave up drawing, and played cricket instead. 'Since God has been pleased to give us the Papacy,' said Leo X on his election, 'let us enjoy it'; and there were few Papacies like a last year at Eton, if one happened to be a swell—the lot of a Whig noble in the eighteenth century, or an Athenian in the swim of the Periclean Age, might be compared to it, but not much else. All this glory—the probability of Pop, the practical certainty of playing in the Harrow Match—had to be resigned, and exchanged for a transpontine *pension* in Paris, and messing about with paints at the Beaux-Arts.

Bitter though it was, the wrench had to be endured; and lo and behold, in a short time the dormant gift reasserted itself, and he was painting away as happily and ardently as if he had never touched a bat: Lord Lytton and M. Bonnat were justified after all. The *pension* was in the Rue St. Jacques, and here I spent some days with him on our way to Venice for a delicious fortnight with his mother and Lady Conny (who, by the way, after 'doing' some of the churches added a verse to the *Benedicite*: 'O all ye wax Virgins, bless ye the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him for ever').

It was kept by Monsieur and Madame Casaubon, he a gentle old Frenchman of whom I best remember his fond panacea for political agitation and every kind of public fuss, which he detested: 'Si seulement tout le monde voulait bien rester tranquillement chez eux.' Madame was an able, good-natured, very managing woman. She had a way with a crying child which I should like to disseminate as a Hint to Young Mothers: she would take it on her knee and speak to it in a whisper, and the child invariably stopped crying so as to hear what she was saying. To have known her is an unmixed advantage, but for one thing—she ruined Sarah Bernhardt's Hamlet for me. In a frizzy reddish-brown wig and a black bodice with a white frill at her neck, Sarah,

down to the waist, *was* Madame Casaubon; and Madame Casaubon in black tights spouting:

‘D’être ou de n’être pas, voilà la question,’

was more than I could face; so I did what I have seldom done—went away after the first act.

A little later Neville set up a studio in the Rue Denfert-Rochereau, where I stayed with him from time to time. One of his furnishing purchases was a second-hand wooden bed of reassuring appearance, which turned out to be full of what are now called bugs, but in those days were only known as either B-flats or Norfolk-Howards. We spent a whole afternoon dropping them into basins and pie-dishes filled with potent insecticide, in which they swam about triumphantly, like so many Rhine-Maidens; and in the end the bed had to be burnt.

He made quick progress in painting, and the time came when I was deputed to take samples of his work for the inspection of George Frederick Watts, who was a friend of the family. Mr. Watts was an impressive old gentleman, dignified and ascetic, very simple in his wisdom of the ancients. ‘Young man,’ he would say, ‘I’ve lived many years, and seen many things, and pondered on all that I have seen; and you may believe me when I tell you that . . .’ birds of a feather flock together, or whatever it might be. I was told that in the kindness of his heart and his love for ‘all things both great and small’ he would never allow a tree to be cut down at Limnerslease, with the result that his wood became an internecine tangle of scraggy stems and etiolated leaves. My chief exhibit on this occasion was a portrait of one of Neville’s nieces, a lovely little thing as I remember it, scumbled in grey and green and silver, with the look of an improvisation. ‘Charming, charming,’ said the old man; ‘but that isn’t how he ought to be painting now. Look at this’; and unlocking a cupboard he brought out a

beautiful pencil drawing of Lady Somers, looking like a silver-point, with a line for every hair. 'That's what I was doing when I was your young friend's age. I drew that so carefully—so carefully—I drew it with my shoes off.' This certainly sounded very careful, though I don't quite know why.

Lady Lytton gave us an introduction to Coquelin aîné, whom we found in a vast room, very light and very bare, with no carpet and hardly any furniture, polishing-off a young actress who was timidly suggesting that he might come and see her perform at a *matinée*. I was struck with the courteous phrase in which he explained that this could not be. 'Voyez-vous, mademoiselle, je suis un malheureux...' (poor Coquelin, debarred from the enjoyment of her prentice art!). When she was gone he turned to us with relief, and took us on a grand tour round the walls, which were hung with little portraits of him in his innumerable parts. When he came to one which he specially liked to remember, he put on the face and struck the attitude of the character, saying: 'Tenez, voyez comme c'est moi'; and he finished up, in his shirt-sleeves, with a magnificent rendering of Cyrano's dying speech, by which I was so much carried away that when he asked if it wasn't finer than *Macbeth*, I answered 'Mais oui, monsieur', and meant it.

In 1901 Victor married the beautiful Miss Pamela Plowden, and this event, so far from closing the manuscript, opened a new chapter in a friendship which has been one of my stand-bys throughout my life; for their house at Knebworth has been a second home to me—a home more populous than my own hermitage in Gray's Inn.

The happy life at Knebworth was shattered in 1933 by the death of the elder son in a flying accident. His father and mother found their only comfort in putting together an



account of his life, which after great heart-searchings was eventually published under the title *Antony, Viscount Knebworth*. As I was one of those who had been most in favour of publication, I am impelled to put the case against a feeling which was and still is widely entertained that the picture which it presented was too intimate, and should have been held too sacred, to be given to the world at large. To my mind the Lyttons were fulfilling a duty. Nowadays the Family as an institution is on trial, and under a cloud: many think, and argue plausibly, that it has survived its usefulness, that there can be little true sympathy between parents and children, and that the young people would have a better chance if they were left to themselves. The Lyttons had it in their power, by a combination of circumstances which was literally unique, to show the other side of the shield, and bestow on their fellow-creatures a shining example of family life at its best and highest.

Antony was a gifted boy, of strong personality, keenly interested in his own character and its growth, singularly analytical, and singularly articulate. He was devoted to both his parents, and they to him; and there seems to have been no bar to his complete intimacy with either. Just at the moment when he was passing from boyhood to manhood, and the plot of his development was thickening day by day, his father went away to India for four years as Governor of Bengal; and thenceforth by every mail letters were exchanged in which Antony told his parents of all that he was doing, thinking and feeling, all 'his tenderness, his joys and fears,' and they answered him with incomparable understanding and sympathy. I cannot but think that both as a 'document' of human nature and as a standard of the attainable relations between father, mother and son, this correspondence is of the highest interest and value, and that the world would have been poorer without it; and the many letters which Victor Lytton has had from strangers all over the Empire who had drawn encouragement

and inspiration from his book have proved that it did not miss its mark.

To go back to the old times: Neville Lytton married Miss Judith Blunt in 1899, on the same day on which my sister married Sir Frederick Maurice; and for several years I saw more of them than of anybody. It was for their sake that I left the paternal roof in Bruton Street in order to share with them my first Gray's Inn habitation, at the top of No. 3 Gray's Inn Place, which was to be their London *pied-à-terre*; and I spent nearly all my week-ends with them, first at Rake Mill near Milford in Surrey, then at Forest Cottage on the Crabbet estate, near Crawley, and finally at Crabbet Park itself, a beautiful house of red brick and white stone which Wilfrid Blunt and Lady Anne had built to their own design and eventually handed over to their daughter. Before my time, it had been the venue of the celebrated Crabbet Club, where such personages as George Curzon, Harry Cust, and George Wyndham met periodically for an intellectual royster, reading aloud occasional poems, and no doubt letting the cannakin clink. One Sunday morning George Wyndham came downstairs feeling not quite himself, and perceived in the breakfast-room two little old-world monks, attired in the Franciscan habit, obviously an hallucination; so he proceeded with presence of mind to walk through them, which he had always been told was the proper course to take with such appearances; but they were solid, and he had a difficult apology to make. The explanation was that the Blunt family, as Founders of Crawley Monastery, had the privilege of private Mass in their own chapel on Sundays and feast-days.

The Monastery contains a singularly beautiful effigy by Wilfrid Blunt of his elder brother Francis, who died a member of the Franciscan Order. This work makes a remarkable trio with Mrs. Harry Cust's monument to her husband, now, I believe, at Belton, and Violet Duchess of

Rutland's exquisite memorial to her elder son, of which there is a version at the Tate—all three recumbent figures of life-size. It is an extraordinary thing that in these three modern instances a mourner should have been moved by sorrow to create, 'once and only once and for one only', a masterpiece in the difficult art of sculpture.

Wilfrid Blunt was a magnificent figure, especially in the Arab dress which he wore whenever he could—to me too alarming for easy intercourse; but Lady Anne, who was Byron's grand-daughter, was enchanting. She was a little woman, ruddy and wrinkled as a pippin in a loft, with the most beautiful speaking voice, and great dignity, combined with an agile energy which caused her always to run upstairs in her Wellington boots till she was over seventy. Like her husband, she preferred Arabs to English people, and Arab ways to ours; and in this she was so thorough that she would wait for the news till she could read it in the Arabic paper when it came a week late from Cairo. She was very kind and generous, and when Neville was to be married in Egypt she wanted to pay for my journey so that I could be his best man; but alas, I couldn't get leave from the Colonial Office.

Neville could be very entertaining, as I first realized when he came up from Eton and I took him through the little passage between Conduit Street and Savile Row. 'I suppose,' he said, 'you know your way about London like a needle in a bunch of hay.' The picture of the busy little needle threading its way was delicious. Mrs. Neville had a perfect story of an Englishwoman who asked a French friend to recommend a tutor for her son, and sent her a long list of the virtues and accomplishments which she required in the candidate. The French lady wrote back: 'Si je trouve ton homme, je l'épouse.'

When their three children were of an age for moral improvement, they were encouraged to practise Thrift by making a collection of threepenny-bits, in which I helped them. The result was that when I came down on a Saturday

afternoon they would run up to me with cries of 'Money, Money, Money!' so the collection was discontinued, as being less conducive to Thrift than to Avarice. I had another lesson in mock-uncleship when I took them to the Zoo in a four-wheeler, and asked them on the way back what they had enjoyed most. They answered with one voice: 'La voiture!'

Neville made a great difference to my life by putting it into my head to collect pictures; but I expect I shall be writing about this later on. It is not the only thing I have to thank him for.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PRIVATE SECRETARY I

Winston Churchill — Lord Elgin — Blenheim — Lady Randolph Churchill — East African Journey — Lord Abingdon—Fire at Burley-on-the-Hill—Board of Trade—Count and Countess Benckendorff—Two Caricatures by Max Beerbohm

AS a general rule a change of Government makes no difference to a First Class Clerk in the Colonial Office, but not so the fall of Mr. Balfour, at the end of 1905, to me. On December 13th I got a note from Lady Granby asking me to a party on the following evening to meet 'lots of my own especial friends'. It was a great lesson always to go to parties, for if I had stayed away my whole remaining life would have been quite different, and in all probability far less interesting and agreeable. One of the first people I met was Winston Churchill, whose appointment as Under Secretary for the Colonies had just been announced. 'How do you do?' said I, 'which I must now say with great respect.' 'Why?' he pounced, 'why with great respect?' 'Because you're coming to rule over me at the Colonial Office.' A little later I saw him on a sofa with his aunt, Mrs. Leslie, who was one of the 'especial friends', looking in my direction and as it seemed discussing me; but I thought no more about it.

Next morning he paid his first visit to the Office, and asked the Permanent Under-Secretary to appoint me as his Private Secretary! This was quite out of the ordinary course, as I was no longer in the class of 'Juniors' to whom such posts, with their extra pay, are a perquisite; however, the



WINSTON CHURCHILL, *circa* 1905

*From a photograph by J. Russell & Sons*



authorities didn't care to make difficulties about their new Minister's first request, and moreover the junior whose turn it would have been was *hors de combat*, seriously ill from a stormy winter crossing of the North Sea. So I was sent for, and told the fate in store for me. By an irony, I was not particularly pleased. I had assimilated myself comfortably to the West African Department; I was two years older than my prospective master—and furthermore, I was a little afraid of him. I had first met him a year before, at a large Christmas party of the Poynders' at Hartham in Wiltshire, and though I had thought him quite the most brilliant person I had ever come across, he had struck me as rather truculent and overbearing. Fortunately, this impression had been mitigated at a second meeting in the summer, also at Hartham, when he had been in lower spirits and a much gentler mood; but I had still not imagined that we could ever have anything in common. However, it would have been scarcely possible to refuse his offer; a suitable arrangement was made about my salary; and there I was.

Late in the afternoon I betook myself to Lady Lytton, who was a great friend of his as well as of mine (I learnt afterwards that she had taken a hand in the boosting of me at the party) and poured out my misgivings. Her answer was one of the nicest things that can ever have been said about anybody. "The first time you meet Winston you see all his faults, and the rest of your life you spend in discovering his virtues"; and so it proved. That night I dined alone with him in his flat in Mount Street, and so far as he was concerned all my doubts were dispelled—he was the man for me, though I could still hardly see myself as the man for him.

Soon afterwards we set out for Manchester, where he was to stand for the North-West Division at the General Election. We installed ourselves at the Midland Hotel, and walked out to take the air, following our noses, and soon finding ourselves in the slums. Winston looked about him, and his



sympathetic imagination was stirred. 'Fancy,' he said, 'living in one of these streets—never seeing anything beautiful—never eating anything savoury—*never saying anything clever!*' (the italics were his—it would be impossible to give a better rendering of italics in the spoken word). The election was a blur of excitement, ending with the great Liberal victory in which the Tories were swept clean out of Manchester—a grand slam in doubled no trumps' as it was summed-up by the brilliant journalist Hands, who was 'covering' it.

Back at the Office, we settled down with some effervescence under the new Colonial Secretary, Lord Elgin, a rugged old Thane of antique virtue and simplicity. Winston regarded him with impatient respect, recognizing his four-square stability and his caninness, but desiderating initiative and dash. What Lord Elgin thought of Winston was his own secret, but I imagine that their qualified esteem was mutual.

Lord Elgin had hitherto lived so unspotted from the world that he had never realized the utility or even the existence of visiting-cards, and now had some printed for the first time. (I like these innocences in the great: Lord Hartington, as is well known, had never heard of napkin-rings; nor had Winston himself of lodgings, till the time came for his own children to be sent to the seaside—when a new planet of human activity swam into his ken, and he examined the system with lively interest.) Stephen Pollen, when he was Lord Elgin's A.D.C. in India, formed a bad habit of riding about in Calcutta with nothing on his head, and one morning the Viceroy handed him a newspaper article animadverting on this want of *tenue* without naming the culprit. 'If the cap fits,' said his Lordship, 'put it on.'

A few years later John Burns called at the Board of Trade, where we then were, before Winston had arrived, so I took him into the big room to wait. His eye fell on a little bronze

bust of Napoleon which always stood on the writing-table. 'Ah,' he said, 'that's bad—that's bad. I had one on *my* table once, but I had to put it away—found I was getting too like him.' There was certainly one maxim of Napoleon's, the celebrated 'dur aux grands', which Winston at that time took too much to heart for the comfort of the Under-Secretaries whose tails he thought wanted twisting; but I think it is true to say that those of the officials who saw most of him liked him best. When he has been unpopular with his subordinates, as has undoubtedly happened, it is because they were not long enough with him at a time to realize how little 'vice' or substance there was in his occasional asperities. I myself never much minded having my head bitten off, because I knew that instead of throwing it into the waste-paper-basket, he would very soon be fitting it back on my neck with care and even with ceremony.

I have no intention of dwelling on his activities at the Colonial Office, but I have a sidelight or two to throw which may be of interest. One of his failures was a speech in the House on Lord Milner's position after his retirement, which was generally felt to be unbecoming in its tone and was long remembered against him. I have always been convinced that the fault was one of manner, not of feeling. He had rehearsed the speech to me beforehand, and so far from thinking it offensive I had been positively moved by the generosity of its spirit! The point, as it seemed to me, was the dignity and self-abnegation with which Milner, after being raised to a pinnacle in South Africa, had accepted his loss of power and the obscurity of his policy under the new régime. But the effect in the House was very different—something went wrong in the delivery—the harshness of utterance which in its proper place is one of Winston's assets as a speaker asserted itself out of season, and he appeared to be taunting a discredited statesman with the evil days on which he had fallen. I couldn't convince anybody at the

time, and it's all very old history now; but I want to put my impression on record.

When the Great War was over, he produced one day a lapidary epigram on the spirit proper to a great nation in war and peace: 'In war, resolution; in defeat, defiance; in victory, magnanimity; in peace, good-will.' (I wish the tones in which he spoke this could have been 'recorded'—the first phrase a rattle of musketry, the second 'grating harsh thunder,' the third a ray of the sun through storm-clouds; the last, pure benediction.) It was some such spirit which governed the South African settlement, in which he played an influential part; and in especial it was largely owing to him that the peace-offering of the Cullinan Diamond was accepted. The Boers knew this, and sent him as a keepsake a model of the stone, which he was proud of and enjoyed showing to his friends. One day his cousin Lady Lilian Grenfell came to luncheon, and the object was sent for. There was some delay, and other topics had already supervened when the butler presented himself at Lady Lilian's elbow with a shapeless lump on a salver, looking like a not-very-well-strained white jelly that had escaped from its mould. She eyed it with distaste, and said: 'No thank you.'

One morning I woke up with an *extinction de voix*. I must premise that through my being laid low with German measles at the time when my voice was breaking, it has always been weak and unduly high. Not that I have no deep organ-tones at my command, but I could never manage to use them in conversation in what seemed to me a natural manner; and if my choice lay between squeaking and gibbering like a ghost in the streets of Rome, and growling like Hamlet's father, I preferred the former. Perhaps this is because I can't hear myself talk—my voice sounds to me quite normal (though that I know for a delusion, from the

vexatiously frequent response of 'Yes madam' to my 'Hullo!' on the telephone); and I was taken aback when in hopes of reassurance I said to Ivor Novello: 'I don't think my voice is so very bad, do you?' and he replied: 'Well, it is rather a drawback'. But this is a long preamble to a very short story. On the morning in question, I appeared before Winston, and said in a whisper: 'I'm afraid I shan't be much use to-day, as I've lost my voice.' 'What?' he thundered in pointed contrast, 'is that resonant organ extinct?'

Another morning, it was my turn to score; but he robbed me of the fruits of victory. He came to the Office full of excitement over Beerbohm Tree's production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, which he had seen the night before; but Tree had made one mistake, he had said:

'Unarm Eros, the long day's task is done,'

which didn't scan; of course the line should begin 'Eros unarm.' I seized the opportunity for a little disquisition on the beauties which may lie in a surprising departure from the norm of a metre, buttressing my thesis with Palgrave's note in the *Golden Treasury* on Shelley's line:

'And wild roses and ivy serpentine,'

to the effect that a good poet *might* have written 'And roses wild,' but it took a great one to write 'And wild roses.' 'Yes,' said Winston, 'and I suppose it would have taken the greatest poet of all to write

'And wild roses and serpentine ivy.'

I had another innings when he put on my hat by mistake, and found to his chagrin that it was too big for him. I thought it tactful to explain that I was the least little bit in the world hydrocephalous.

One of my perquisites was an occasional visit to Blenheim; and I had a lesson in the possible variation of standards when Winston's brother Jack warned me not to expect a *very* large house. Alex Thynne had told me a story of his ancestress, the Lady Bath of the beginning of last century, and the corresponding Duchess of Marlborough, neither of whom had ever seen the other's house, but had each a passionate belief in the superiority of her own. At last Lady Bath, becoming hot for certainties, set out from Longleat on a cross-country drive to Blenheim. One glance at the façade was enough to set her lurking doubts at rest; and proceeding in triumph to the front door she said to the man who opened it: 'I hear there's a very beautiful house near here called Blenheim, could you tell me where it is?'

One evening at Blenheim the question arose whether the word idyll was pronounced Eyedil or Iddil, and when I was appealed to as the classical scholar of the party I voted for Eyedil, on the ground that the syllable was long in Greek. 'Yes, of course,' said Marlborough's mother, Lady Blandford, who was no blue-stocking, 'one always says the Eyedils of March.'

It was at Blenheim that I first met Lady Randolph Churchill, who soon became one of my dearest friends. She was an incredible and most delightful compound of flagrant worldliness and eternal childhood, in thrall to fashion and luxury (life didn't begin for her on a basis of less than forty pairs of shoes) yet never sacrificing one human quality of warm-heartedness, humour, loyalty, sincerity, or steadfast and pugnacious courage. By the time I knew her, the first volume of her beauty was closed; but years afterwards she opened a second, when she suddenly decided to let hair, waist, complexion and everything go, and became in a day one of the most beautiful human beings I have seen. Charles Morgan in *The Fountain* has a quiet sentence which distils all the sermons and satires on the losing battle women wage with Time: 'How cleverly the Baroness, in an attempt to

preserve her youth, had preserved everything except youth itself.' But Lady Randolph had always kept her youth, and the moral wasn't pointed till she merged it simply and sweetly in her natural age.

The first of the many abodes in which I knew her was a perfect little manor-house near St. Albans, Salisbury Hall, which had been Nell Gwynn's *petite maison*. It was the scene, in Lady Randolph's belief, of the celebrated though apocryphal set-to in which Nell threatened to kill her baby if Charles II wouldn't give it a dukedom, and he averted a calamity by telling her in the nick of time 'not to throw the Duke of St. Albans out of the window.' There was a delicious garden surrounded with a moat, by which for long summer hours I sat 'storing my memory' like Sir William Lucas with the complicated Loves of the Victorians and Edwardians. As a point of social history, it may be of interest to record an observation of Lady Randolph's that in all her wide and deep experience of London society there had been only two, or she may have said three, known instances of girls having affairs before they married. It would be a glozing matron who would say that now.

The high light of our time at the Colonial Office was a four-months official tour at the end of 1907 and the beginning of 1908 to Cyprus, British East Africa (as Kenya was then called), Uganda, the Soudan, and Egypt. When Winston asked me if I would like to come with him, I answered in a favourite figure of his own, 'will a bloody duck swim?' Getting my outfit was a pleasurable excitement, but I was taken down a peg by the future Lord Chalmers, whom I went to see at the Treasury about my allowance, when I argued, on his demurring to my proposed purchase of some requisite or superfluity, that 'Winston was taking one.' 'I daresay he is,' replied the caustic Chalmers, 'but *you're* not a Blenheim spaniel.'

I joined Winston at Malta, and we sailed from thence in

the second-class cruiser *Venus*, which would otherwise have been doing her gun-practice. The officers were annoyed at losing this opportunity of self-improvement for the sake of conveying a Liberal, or as they put it, Radical, Under-Secretary through the Red Sea (most naval officers are touchingly Tory); but the Captain, Cecil Chapman, asked two of them each night to dine in his cabin, and Winston, putting forth his powers of seduction, had them all at his feet by the time we landed at Mombasa. For my part, I was created a Knight of the Venus Canvas Bath, and appointed as an Honorary Midshipman, with a warrant bearing the signature of Neptune R.

The sporting aspect of the expedition will be dealt with in a later chapter; and I hope that no one will seek here for illumination of the political administrative financial and other problems which confronted the Under-Secretary of State. I have unearthed a series of high-paid articles which I contributed at the time to the *Manchester Guardian*, and I must say I am surprised at their grasp and solidity; but any charm they may have had, even for their author, has faded.

The third permanent member of our party was Colonel Gordon Wilson, who had married Winston's aunt Lady Sarah Churchill—a man of great charm, humour, and detachment, accustomed to take things as they came, and looking-on at our busy doings with dry amusement. On the march through Uganda we were caught-up by a bazaar rumour, which had evidently got distorted, that an Ordinance had been passed prohibiting the Exhortation of Milk from Native Mothers. What could this possibly be? Gordon suggested that it certainly sounded like an offence under the Married Women's Property Act.

Our fluctuating escort was a gallant company of young officers, military and administrative, with several of whom I made friendships only broken by the War, in which they lost their lives. I was of course carried away by admiration of

their being, and did my best to mould myself on their pattern, especially in attire, which was the easiest field of emulation; cutting off the knees of my khaki knickerbockers, rolling the sleeves of my khaki shirt up to the armpits, and folding its front inwards so as to leave the largest possible V exposed, like my legs and arms, to the tropical sun. Winston shook his head over my folly, and warned me of the agony which would ensue. Sure enough, after a day's steaming over Lake Khioja, where the whole world was one great globe of illumined blue ringed round the middle with a narrow green horizon of palm trees, and like the Canallers in *Moby Dick* I 'ripened my apricot thigh upon the sunny deck,' my skin rose up in hummocky blisters, more like dish-covers; and for the next two days on dry land, I dragged my slow length along like a wounded alexandrine, only perking-up into such jauntiness as I could compass when I was under Winston's immediate eye. On the second evening he came into my tent at the moment when my native 'boy' Josiah was pouring whisky over the great open spaces which had been left by the bursting of the dish-covers: concealment was at an end, and I recognized the magnanimity with which he mingled no hint of 'I told you so' in his compassion. I soon got my second skin, and with it perfect freedom of movement, combined with a pleasing sense of primeval manhood; and as Winston persisted in muffling himself up like Father Christmas, I felt that in the long run I had the best of it.

I needn't have called Josiah a 'boy' in inverted commas, as he really was a boy, and not like many of his colleagues a man in middle-age. I don't remember much about him except one or two agreeable turns of speech. He made 'minute' into a pet-name by putting the second syllable back to front, telling me when I asked him the time that it was 'ten minties to six.' Neville Lytton on his first morning in Egypt was woken-up with 'Bonjour mon Colonel, veux-tu prendre ton bain?' and Josiah produced a pendant to this in the Palace at Khartoum, when I sent him to get my bath



ready and he came back with the announcement that there was 'a European in the bath.' Certainly Englishmen were Europeans, but I had never thought of them in that way; so Josiah was giving me a lesson in what came later to be called League Mentality.

The best of our stay in Nairobi was an expedition to Fort Hall, riding all day along the base of the great mountain Kenya, which we were told presented between bottom and summit a vertical synopsis of the Earth's climates, from equatorial to arctic. Before leaving England I had taken the precaution of rubbing-up my dim, infrequent horsemanship on Arab steeds in the Neville Lyttons' manège at Crabbet; so I was able to sustain this ordeal without discomfort or discomfort. Fort Hall, now one of the most important places in the Colony, was at that time a small outlying station, run by three or four officers—among them the admirable Kenneth Dundas, who joined our party next day and went with us as far as Kisumu. At this first dinner he made us sit up with an epigram: 'getting other people to do one's work, which is the highest form of skilled labour.' Winston was astonished at finding such a gem in the dark unfathomed caves of Kenya—he said it was the sort of thing one might expect from a man who saw Arthur Balfour every day.

From Kisumu we steamed across the Victoria Nyanza among green islands, like Satan flying past the stars, which

'nigh hand seemed happy Iles,  
Like those Hesperian Gardens fam'd of old,  
Fortunate Fields, and Groves and flourie Vales,  
Thrice happy Iles——'

but if we had 'stayed to enquire who dwelt happy there,' the answer would have been, Nobody—they had been swept bare of their prosperous, teeming populations by the Sleeping Sickness.

Uganda changed my opinion of Missionaries, whom I had been apt to regard as a vulgarizing influence, warping the lives of their victims into forms which did not suit their nature or their circumstances. Here, as we drove through an avenue of dignified Baganda, black but comely in their long white robes like the angels in *Green Pastures*, clapping their hands in grave courtesy of welcome and beaming with pleasure at the *Wey wollia wolly*, or 'Well done everybody,' with which we had been primed to respond, it was impossible not to feel that civilization had taken a forward step. Less than a generation back, these gentle people had been ferocious and predatory savages; and sunning themselves here and there we saw old women with stumps for arms, the former concubines of the cruel Kabaka Thakombaw, who had cut their hands off when they lost his favour. And we were treated to a war-dance for which the Baganda had routed out their disused panoplies, their war-paint and their feather tiaras and sun-bonnets, and rehearsed their evolutions like English villagers studying for Druids or Boadicea's warriors in a pageant. Not so long ago the War-dance had been an essential of their life and polity; now they excused it with a deprecating smile and shrug, as a faintly discreditable curiosity of their history. It would be reassuring to think that twenty years hence we might be taking the same attitude to the Royal Military Tournament or the Aldershot Tattoo.

Their just pride was in the vast and imposing Cathedral of Kampala, built as a labour of love by the flock of the Church Missionary Society, with its steep thatched roof, its bamboo-covered walls, its great white pillars and cool dim airy spaces. Here alone was an attempt—and a singularly happy one—to adapt native construction and the dictates of climate to anything that deserved the name of architecture.

The Bellman in the *Hunting of the Snark*, who 'had hoped at least, when the wind blew due East, that the ship would *not* travel due West,' might with more reason have expected to

find the Uganda Railway in Uganda; but he would have been disappointed, and for the hundred and twenty miles or so from Entebbe, the Beersheba of the Protectorate, to its Dan, Gondokoro, we had to make our way on foot, 'winding with toilsome march our long array.' But there was no hardship, for at every halting-place some Genie had erected a spacious Banda, or rest-house, walled and roofed with grass meticulously thatched, where we dined and slept each night.

On one of our marches I was told that the inhabitants of a village we had just passed through had picked me out as the *Bwana Balogi*, or Big Noise, of the party, because, as they said, I looked 'much the fiercest.' I tried in vain to reconstruct and recapture the facial expression and imposing gait, so alien from my habitual modest mansuetude, which by some happy chance had earned me this gratifying opinion.

To a Zoo-bounded cockney, the wild life was a daily astonishment. Standing at the top of the stupendous Murchison Falls, one of the party fired a shot, and on the instant, hundreds of feet below, the banks of the river crumbled and fell into the water. It was not the banks, but the crocodiles that had been slumbering on them as thick as sardines in a tin. The footstep of the Hare in La Fontaine's fable sends the Frogs jumping into the pond—

Grenouilles aussitôt de sauter dans les ondes—

how much more thrilling when the frogs were crocodiles!

Crocodiles one day, and hippopotamuses the next. It sounds paradoxical to be unable to tell a hippopotamus from a water-lily; but the huge creatures wallowed in the rivers with only their upper lips showing above water, so that honestly, at a little distance it was impossible to be certain which they were; and many a blameless nymphæa fell a victim to mistaken identity. Our rarity was the White Rhinoceros, whose name might have conjured up in Herman Melville's imagination a phantasm as sinister as the Great White Whale;

but it turned out to deserve no grislier adjective than 'subfusc.'

From Gondokoro we proceeded down the Nile in a little steamer which progressed by a succession of tangents, first hitting one bank and then swinging across to hit the other. I forget how many days we passed in the 'Sudd,' where there is nothing in ken but 'green beds of growing rushes where no leaf blooms or blushes.' It was strange to find that the small and friendly earth, as a home-keeping person had known it, could afford so vast an area of waste, and bear an aspect so indifferent and unresponsive. There was a story that Lady Cromer's maid on the third or fourth day of this had said to her mistress 'How long, my Lady, must we tarry in this shrubbery?' but as I was told afterwards that Lady Cromer had never been in the Sudd, it must have been someone else's maid.

It has been remarked that geography is best learnt by travel; and the knowledge which I established on this journey of the whereabouts of the Soudan came in useful on a later occasion. The thirty-year-old son of a house where I was staying (which shall be nameless) was in consultation, evidently on some knotty point, with a lady who had been the governess and remained in the family on a confidential footing. At last she turned to me, and said 'Mr. Marsh, you know everything. Is it necessary, in writing to the Soudan, to put India?' 'Not only unnecessary,' I replied, 'but a positive drawback.'

At Khartoum we suffered our one calamity. Winston had brought out from England his valet George Scrivings, who had been a steward in his mother's hospital-ship *Maine* in the South African war, and ever since his stand-by and faithful friend. He was a man of decided character, quite undaunted by his formidable master, who was once amused by my remarking that 'Scrivings had a strong sense of justice.' He seemed full of health and vigour, but the tropics found a

chink in his defences, and he died after a few days' illness. This was a great sorrow to us all, and most of all to Winston, who had brought him away from his home and his wife and children to die in his service; and I was grateful to him for his confidence in my right feeling when he told me that though it might seem an odd thing to say, he knew I should understand him if he owned that he would have minded less if it had been me. Scrivings, who had been a yeoman in the Oxfordshire Hussars, was buried with military honours, and the combination of the two most impressive of all rituals, the Christian and the soldierly, was moving in the extreme.

I put something about this sad event in my last letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, and when we were back at the Colonial Office one of the Messengers thanked me for what I had written, telling me that he and his colleagues had read it, and been greatly touched and impressed. 'We didn't know,' he said, 'that people like you felt like that about people like us.' This, though I was glad of it in a way, was a rather painful surprise and shock to me, as I had always thought that I was on easy and so to speak human terms with the staff—it reminded me of a sentimental but charming line given by Octave Mirbeau to the heroine of *Les Mauvais Bergers*: 'Il n'y a pas de méchants cœurs, il n'y a que des cœurs trop loin l'un de l'autre.' At any rate, there was nothing of the kind in my relations with my chief friend among the messengers, the debonair Batley, who used to put out my evening clothes when I had to dress at the Office. As often as not we had been lighted by the same candle the evening before, so we had plenty to gossip about. After a party of the Beattys' at First Lord's House, Batley told me he was glad I hadn't been at his table for supper. 'Oh Batley, why?' I said, feeling a little hurt till he explained that Lord Brecknock had inadvertently dropt the end of a cigarette in a soup-tureen, where it had lain perdu at its deadly work till the wife of the Swiss

Minister leapt to her feet with the cry that she had been poisoned.

The Temple of Abu-Simbel, our first of the Egyptian wonders, was the meeting-place of two worlds. The novel and exciting charm of out-door existence in Kenya and Uganda, where there was no recognizable Past except the geological, had absorbed me, and I hadn't been conscious of the lack; but that august and mysterious pile and those eternally-brooding time-worn deities of stone, half-seen in the twilight before dawn, pulled me suddenly back to the old proportion and perspective. Life was once more not all contemporary, but an inheritance of ages; and I felt, if I may be allowed the comparison, like the journeying Moon and the onward-moving stars in the margin of *The Ancient Mariner*, when they revisit their native country and their own natural homes, and enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected.

Soon after our return to London early in 1908, Campbell-Bannerman died, and it became known that in the course of the resulting changes Winston would be included in the Cabinet. But in which post? there seemed to be several possibilities, and the only one from which he expressed a decisive aversion was the Local Government Board. 'I refuse,' he said, 'to be shut up in a soup-kitchen with Mrs. Sidney Webb.' It turned out to be the Board of Trade, and thither he asked me to accompany him. This was quite unusual, but there was a precedent—by a sufficiently curious coincidence, in the case of Lord Randolph Churchill, whose official Private Secretary at the India Office had followed him to the Treasury. Needless to say, I asked for nothing better; so we migrated to the former drawing-room of a converted mansion in Whitehall Gardens, which made far the most beautiful and distinguished Minister's room of any that I have known. (I might have excepted the Boardroom

at the Treasury, but by the time I went there Mr. Lloyd George had spoilt it by painting it white.)

This year was memorable also for two Churchill marriages, Winston's to Miss Clementine Hozier, and his brother Jack's to Lady Gwendeline, alias Goonie, Bertie. Both the ladies were great beauties, and as both had often been my partners in 'Mixt Dance and Midnight Bal,' there was no ice to break on their entering the family of my Employer.

Lady Goonie's father was Lord Abingdon, an irascible old gentleman of racy mind and speech. One Sunday morning when I was staying with him at Wytham Abbey, near Oxford, I went for a walk by myself and saw a notice in his handwriting, nailed to a tree-trunk beside a gate:

Undergraduates are not allowed to come galloping in these woods.

ABINGDON.

I have always rejoiced in his account of his bear-leadership to a young Count Potocki, who was going up to Oxford in circumstances requiring precaution. He had been preceded there by an elder brother, whose 'course,' like that of the Rev. Joseph Sympson as described by Wordsworth in *The Excursion*,

'had been irregular, I might say wild,'

and had ended in expulsion. Undeterred by this set-back, the Potockis, who must have had a strong faith in our University system, were still intent on giving their younger son the advantages of Oxford; and thinking the authorities might jib at a second chip of the same block, they asked their old friend Lord Abingdon to pave the way for him, which he did by means of a personally-conducted round of visits to the Dons. Whether or not they were like those described by Wordsworth in *The Prelude* as

'men unsoured, of character grotesque,'

I cannot say; more probably it was only what Edith Olivier calls 'that peculiar quality which only grows in the fusty atmosphere of an ancient college'; but at any rate, on issuing from one of the staircases, the supercilious and sophisticated young Pole turned to his guide with the comment: 'Quel monde à part!' A Lady of Title, who lived in an outlying part of London, was fatigued after a morning's shopping, and finding herself in the neighbourhood of Lord Abingdon's house, rather eccentrically rang the bell and sent up to ask if his Lordship would allow her to have a bath. His answer was: 'Tell her she can sandpaper herself if she likes.'

Jack Churchill's wedding, which came first, took place at Oxford, and I timed my yearly holiday to begin with it. As I was thus going on for a series of visits, I packed not only my London clothes for the ceremony, but all the country clothes I had, and took with me my Uncle Spencer's accurate gold watch on its massive chain, together with two or three valuable tie-pins, which were the nearest I ever got to heirlooms, and also, like the Owl and the Pussy-Cat, 'plenty of money.' The reason for the seemingly uncalled-for particularity of this inventory will presently appear. After the wedding I went with Winston to stay with his cousin and Parliamentary Private Secretary, Freddie Guest, at Burley-on-the-Hill, near Oakham, one of the stateliest homes of England. It was a house-warming party, and never was the epithet so grimly appropriate; for in the middle of the night I was roused from the deep stupor which sometimes follows a specially good dinner by my host pounding on the door. 'Eddie, Eddie, get up at once, the house is on fire!' (It transpired later that the new heating-apparatus installed by the Guests, which was in use for the first time, had been carried away by the zeal of the novice, and 'heated' only too well.) I jumped out of bed, and like Satan 'for the general safety despising my own' rushed downstairs in my pyjamas



and slippers to what might be called 'the pumps,' without even thinking to put my more portable valuables in my jacket pocket, which wouldn't have taken a moment; but perhaps it was just as well, for my bedroom was exactly over the heart of the fire, and in a few minutes all was swallowed up.

I found grey darkness everywhere, for the first thing the fire had done was to derange the electric light. The large house-party assembled, dressed as might be, and soon we *were joined by the fire-brigade and a concourse of neighbours.* Winston commandeered a fireman's helmet and assumed the direction of operations, but he had nothing to go upon—the house was full of treasures, but nobody knew where they were. I devoted myself to the first room in which I found books, and threw them all out on the grass; but the light of day revealed them as the servants' library, and meanwhile all the priceless Elizabethan manuscripts etc. had perished. My next futility was helping a band of willing workers to cut tapestries out of their panels in a part of the house which in the event the flames never reached.

Some time in the small hours they were got under, and we went out on the lawn, where it was a tragical sight to see the real owners of Burley (who had moved into a smaller house nearby) sitting in a gig and watching the destruction of their home, which had been their love and their pride, with tears pouring down their faces. But there was nothing more to be done, and in time for breakfast at the Rectory F. E. Smith and I, the only total losers, were rigged out in borrowed suits a world too wide for our shapely shanks. Thus 'wofully arrayed' we returned to London, where there were still a few old clothes at the bottom of my chest of drawers—I have never since felt well-dressed or had everything handsome about me.

We were two years at the Board of Trade, where my indigenous colleague (henceforward in every fresh Office we went to I was coupled with a coequal Private Secretary who

belonged there) was Willy Clark, an old Cambridge friend, who has since reached summits in Canada and South Africa. By this time I was thirty-five, and I suppose the first flush of youth must have been passing from me, for I find that Memory dwells less fondly and less firmly on the Board of Trade than on the Colonial Office, though I am sure that prison-house for prison-house it was just as shady. Thus I retain very little from what must have been a most interesting trip with Winston, who was then plotting the Labour Exchanges, to see the system at work in Alsace. There was one small item of Comparative Ethnology: the amazement with which the German officials who dined with us at Strasburg beheld the easy terms on which an English Private Secretary stood with his Chief—not once did I click my heels when Winston came into the room! they could hardly believe their eyes.

What I do wish I remembered is Winston's explanations of the Franco-Prussian battle-fields we visited—so lucid that for a fleeting instant I saw the campaign with the clear eye of History, or at least of Topography; but it all soon faded away.

When he had seen enough Labour Exchanges, Winston went back to London, and I sallied forth across Europe on a visit to the Benckendorffs at Sosnovka, their country house in the depths of the Russian Province of Tambov. Count and Countess Benckendorff had come to England some time before under the ægis of Maurice Baring, who had made fast friends with them in their previous post at Copenhagen, and they had immediately become perhaps the most popular ambassadorial couple in London. Their parties at the Embassy, where the first thing that met the eye was a staircase flanked with two parallel ascending lines of footmen dressed in swallow-tails of cloth-of-gold, like Milton's 'bands of Guardians bright' on Jacob's ladder, were the most spectacular I ever saw.

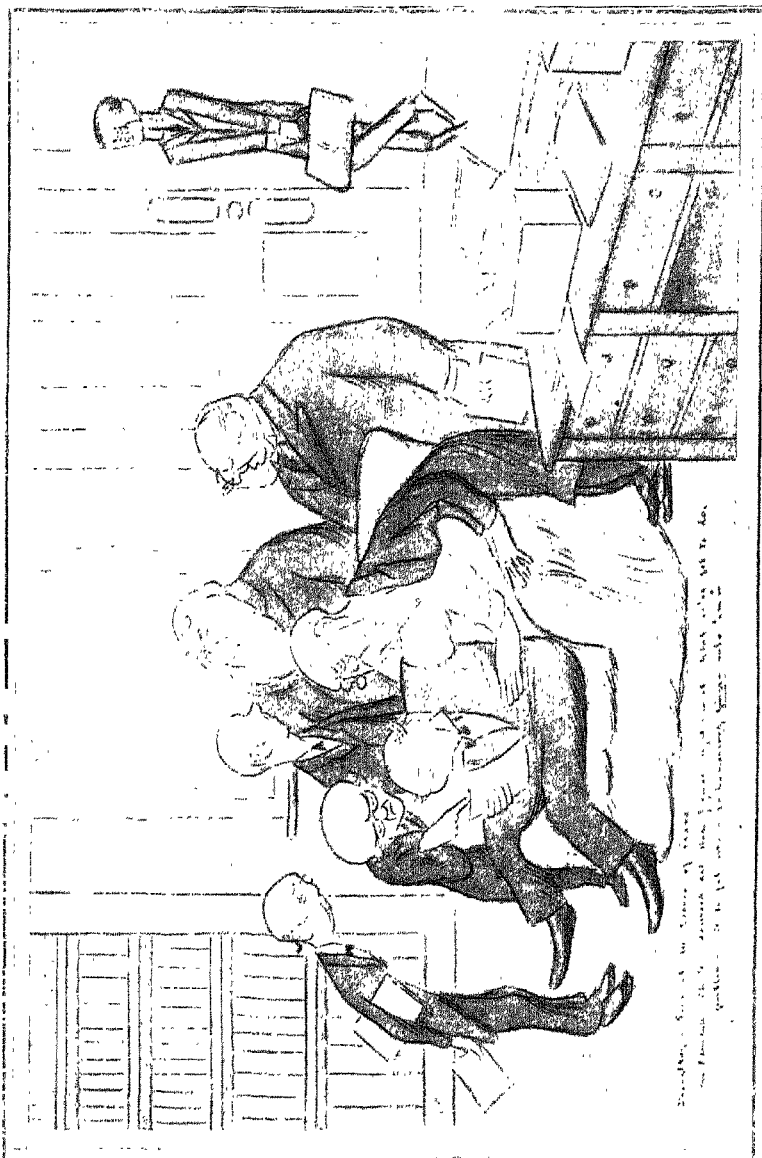
The Count, with his tall and slender figure, long narrow

'equalized' with me by shooting a hare, upon which he danced up to his valet, who was loading for him, exclaiming in jubilation: 'Welby! I've shot a hare!' Welby, who had previously served masters to whom the exploit would have been a matter of routine, answered calmly: 'Is that so, Sir?'

Maurice and I left Sosnovka together and spent a day or two in Moscow, where I had the meal of my life at the famous Testov Restaurant. When I read of the salubrious black loaves generated by the Soviet Government, I could weep to remember the Moscow bread of those days and how it went with caviare and vodka. The local water had a peculiar affinity with flour—I was told a barrel of it was sent to Tsarskoie-Selo every day to make rolls for the Czar, and no wonder!

I went on by myself to St. Petersburg, and enthusiastically 'did' the Hermitage. Maurice had betrayed his limitations as an art critic by warning me against the magnificent Franz Hals room, because the subjects of the portraits were so repulsive—he hadn't dared go close up to them for fear of the smell. I left cards at the Embassy, and was asked to dine with Harold Nicolson and his brother, whose father was the Ambassador. They showed an unaccountable knowledge of my recent movements, and after teasing me for a while revealed that on the back of one of my visiting-cards they had found detailed notes of my expenditure.

Before I leave the Board of Trade, I must celebrate Max Beerbohm's caricature of Winston discussing his Estimates with a group of imaginary Civil Servants. The types, which range from the Mastodon to the Mullet, are based perhaps rather on the artist's recollections of Trollope than on the actualities of the early 1900's; but each one is the creation of a master. Winston is treated rather cruelly; and by the door stands the only other figure taken from real life—myself, prim, slim, demure, and in attire most flatteringly correct





and dapper. The original water-colour, an exquisite harmony in tone, is one of my treasures; and when I show it to a visitor for the first time, I am in the habit of adapting the words of Swift when in his old age he took up *The Tale of a Tub*: 'God, what a genius I had when I wrote that book!' 'God!' I say, 'what a figure I had when Max did that drawing!'

This was not the only time that he immortalized my association with Winston. Some years later, when we were at the Admiralty, he asked if he might come and see me there, as he was planning a caricature of us both for which he wished to revive his impression of me. My only stipulation was that he shouldn't make me look as if I were afraid of Winston; but when I saw the drawing, in which I was asking leave to include in my forthcoming volume of *Georgian Poetry* Mr. George Wyndham's beautiful and celebrated poem 'We want eight and we won't wait' (an allusion to a controversy about the number of the new Dreadnoughts), I found that Winston was represented as Termagant, and I as 'distilled almost to a jelly in the act of fear.' I expostulated with Max, who told me that the emotion he had depicted was not fear, but an 'elegant dubiety;' but I was still too cross with him to acquire the original—a piece of childishness which I now regret.

In 1910 the Cabinet went into the melting-pot again, and Winston emerged at the Home Office, with me in his train. (By this time it was an understood thing that I was Ruth to his Naomi, and that whither he went, so long as it was not into the actual Wilderness, where I should have no visible means of support, I should go.) But I am like a conjuror spinning a row of plates, who leaves the centre of his line to revive a dwindling rotation at the extremities, and I will now turn my attention and I hope that of my readers to other spheres. As however this chapter has been mainly about Winston, the end of it may be as good a place as another to

collect without chronological order a few of my favourite Winstoniana. Some of them are in Hansard, but I think buried deep, so it may be worth while bringing them to light.

Sir William Joynson-Hicks made some statement in the House to which Winston gave signs of demurring. 'I see my Right Hon. friend shakes his head,' said Jix, 'but I am only expressing my own opinion.' 'And I,' answered Winston, 'am only shaking my own head.' Wedgwood Benn was easily moved to wrath, and on one occasion Winston said something which brought him to his feet bubbling over with protest so vehement as to be almost inarticulate. 'My Right Hon. friend,' said Winston, 'should not develop more indignation than he can contain.' And he gave a delicious snub to the budding Oswald Mosley, who was thought to get on his legs unduly often: 'I can well understand the hon. member speaking for practice, which he badly needs'. His 'Physician, comb thyself,' apropos of the retention by the War Office of its own clerks when Conscription came in, is probably still remembered; but no one will object to being reminded of it.

One of the volumes of Grove's Dictionary of Music was labelled IMPROPERIA—PLAINSONG. I am afraid my next item comes under the head of *Improperia*, but the impropriety is very slight, and I hope it may be forgiven for the sake of the joke. Winston was speaking at Darwen of the precarious position of Great Britain in that she was entirely dependent for her existence on supplies from overseas, which might be interrupted if she didn't keep herself strong enough to maintain them. Other great powers in the past, he said, had been exposed to a like insecurity. The Venetian Republic would have perished in a moment if the waters of the Mediterranean had ever broken down the supports on which the city was raised above them; and the life of Egypt was bound up with the inundation of the Nile. 'And the Venetians,' he went on, 'were always thinking about their piles, and the Egyptians were always thinking about their

water.' It was a tribute to his power over an audience that nobody appeared to give any untoward application to these words. Again, I heard him tell a vast assembly in Edinburgh that the late government had played 'battlecock and shuttledore' with the fortunes of the country; and from my 'prospect high' on the platform I saw no eyelid bat.

Jack Seely, now Mottistone, will forgive me for recording a fragment of wartime dialogue which took place when we three were dining at the Cavendish Hotel. Jack had been holding forth at some length on a grievance he had against the War Office, and Winston asked him why he didn't raise the point with the authorities—he was sure they would put it right in a moment. 'No, no,' said Jack; '*mea virtute me involvo.*' 'Yes,' Winston answered on the tick, 'you get tied up in your own virtue.'



## CHAPTER IX

### THE PLEASURES OF LIFE

(With acknowledgements to Sir John Lubbock)

Edwardian Society—Sir John and Lady Horner—Sir Walter Raleigh—Edward Horner—Patrick Shaw-Stewart—Julian and Billy Grenfell—Lady Oxford—Mr. Asquith—Raymond Asquith—Lady Violet Bonham-Carter—Anthony Asquith—Princess Antoine Bibesco—Rutland family—Winston Churchill's letter on Prayers for Rain—Mrs. Harry Lindsay—Lord Basil and Lord Freddie Blackwood—Lady Wenlock—Leeds family—Wemyss family—Weddings—Mary Lady Wemyss.

FOR about six years down to 1910 or thereabouts, I lived almost entirely, outside office hours, for Pleasure (to be carefully distinguished from Dissipation). I can't be sure whether this is a confession or not. The identities of the less eminent Victorians are now blurred by the mists of Time, and apt to merge into one another, so that I can no longer clearly differentiate Sir George Cornwall-Lewis from Sir Arthur Helps; but one of those worthies it was who observed that life would be tolerable were it not for its amusements. But there is much to be said for amusements, so long as they are after one's own heart, and not swallowed indiscriminately because they seem to amuse other people. Robert Nichols has a delicious imitation of Arnold Bennett chirping that I was 'too social;' but as I really did enjoy my balls and dinners and country visits, I won't go back on them now.

It is the current custom to depict 'Edwardian Society' as vulgar and vicious, and so, no doubt, some of it was; but

there was another part which was not obnoxious to these adjectives, and in its elegance, its culture, and its dutifulness, must have been acknowledged by anybody not vowed to the ideals of Totalitarian Equalitarianism to be worthy of the place it held in English life.

I was undeniably very lucky in the circle of happy families into which I was carried by my friendships with Maurice Baring and the Lyttons. Sometimes I made friends with the parents first, sometimes with the children; and as in age I was roughly half-way between the two generations, I fitted-in fairly well with both. I foresee two difficulties in writing about them: where to begin, and where to stop.

I have never felt so completely adopted into another family as when Sir John Horner poked his head into a room where I was reading by myself at Mells and said: 'Where's your mother?' He was a grand old gentleman of the traditional country school, my ideal of a Whig—a scholar and a humourist, teeming with out-of-the-way information on all kind of subjects. What was especially endearing in him was a vein of contrariness, the crustiness of a perfectly-baked loaf, which grew on him with age. I hope no one who has read Lady Horner's *Time Remembered* will complain of my re-telling one of her stories, in which I have the rights of a participant. I was spending a Sunday at Mells, and suddenly remembered in the middle of dinner that I had said nothing about the necessity of my going to London by the early train, as I was to be best man to Ronald Storrs at midday. This as it happened was most inconvenient, and Lady Horner was very naturally vexed with my carelessness. Her daughter backed her up, even my old friend Graham the parlourmaid threw in her weight against me; and I was on the point of resigning myself to being late for the wedding when Sir John interposed to save me. 'I don't know,' he said, 'if *you* attach any importance to what these women say; but I can only tell you that if *I* wanted to catch the early train the Virgin Mary

shouldn't stop me.' The train was known as the Virgin Mary Train ever afterwards.

Late in his life he grew frail, and used to spend the whole afternoon in bed. One Saturday his daughter Mrs. Raymond Asquith arrived at Mells with me, and at teatime posted herself in subjects which would be likely to interest him. She was told that he had taken pleasure in reading aloud *The Story of Burnt Njal*, and gone so far as to make a genealogical tree of the characters. Thus primed, she began at dinner: 'I hear you've been reading *Burnt Njal* out loud, Daddy. I do wish I'd been here.' Sir John made the most unexpected answer I've ever heard. 'Yes, I daresay you do; but you can't be in two places at once.' Breasting this breaker, Mrs. Asquith bobbed up with: 'I'm told you've drawn up a genealogy of the characters—that must have made it much clearer.' But he was not to be appeased. 'On the contrary,' he said, 'it made it much more difficult.'

It is almost impossible for me to write about Lady Horner.

Sur les éloges que l'envie  
Doit avouer qui lui sont dus,  
Elle ne veut pas qu'on appuie.

So 'I won't say what I was going to say, but what I will say' is that all her friends know her for the wisest of women: in friendship staunch and serviceable, uniting keen criticism with shining benevolence; practical and broad-minded as befitted the friend of Haldane, beauty-loving as befitted the friend of Burne-Jones: the perfect mistress of perfect houses. I have already given two of her proverbs, and here is a maxim, for a slight specimen of her worldly wisdom: 'One can get in almost anywhere by writing Admit Two on one's visiting-card.' She dreamt one night that she was unexpectedly called upon for a speech at a public dinner in Bath, and rose to the occasion. 'I have neither

youth,' she said, 'which is the only excuse for ignorance, nor wisdom, which is the only justification for age.'

Her daughter Mrs. Raymond Asquith, who inherits her brains and sense of beauty, is more what Walter Raleigh used to call 'drimmy' (i.e. dreamy). She thought ill of me for not answering a letter she had written me during the war, but forgave me when she got it back from the Dead-letter Office and found she had directed it to '5 Raymond Buildings, Salisbury Plain.' Her husband was stationed on the Plain at the time, and one 'Raymond' had led to the other. The wit and the kindness have descended to the third generation. When I was about to leave the Civil Service and live on a pension instead of a salary, I told Mrs. Asquith's daughter Lady Perdita Jolliffe that I should have to pare every cheese I could lay my hands on; and a day or two after my retirement she sent me a magnificent Stilton with a card on which she had written 'To Pare.'

The name of Walter Raleigh brought back to me the first Liberal King's-Birthday Party, in 1906. The great hall of the India Office was mainly filled with rather nondescript persons who looked as if they had left their goloshes in the cloakroom. Suddenly I spied the lanky form of the Professor, as we called him, his pale rock-hewn face towering out of the throng, like a Mountain of the Moon, with Lady Horner at his side. Catching sight of me and my companion, he waved his long arms in the air with a cry of: 'Human beings! human beings at last!'

The second son, Mark, who died very young, was one of the most delightful little boys I have known, something like Crossjay in *The Egoist*. He was the original of the child in *Punch* who was heard just outside the dining-room door, when his nurse was bringing him in 'to dessert,' saying 'Tumpany or no tumpany, I will not have my face cleaned with spits.'

The elder, Edward, was one of my greatest friends. I found the other day a forgotten sketch of him which I wrote for my own comfort when he was killed in November 1917,

and as I think it gives a fair idea of what he was, I will print it here.

Edward Horner, without an achievement to his name except his gallant death, was one of the remarkable figures of his time. But except in the sense that he lived every moment of his life with full receptiveness, he was not quite of his time. He was a typical aristocrat, but typical rather of the eighteenth century than of the twentieth. There was something splendid in him, beginning with his appearance. He was very tall, and graceful; his head, but for a nose a little too large, was of a Greek type most like the Hermes of Praxiteles, with perfect modelling of forehead, mouth and chin, gray luminous eyes, and fair and curling hair; and his hands were large and beautiful. He was a considerable dandy, with a touch of individuality in harking back to older fashions, stocks, and hats with significant brims; and he loved choice accessories, sticks with ivory knobs, folded ties, and pins. His character and his ways were splendid too—he was generous and free-handed to the point of extravagance, and in everything absolutely fearless, or audacious; adored by servants and tenants, and delighted in by everyone who valued salience above convention. There was something in him which made him not exactly dominant, but conspicuous, in every company; his general strikingness being backed-up by unfailing vivacity, a singular sense of humour, and a mastery of language which was for his purposes complete.

It is doubtful whether if he had lived he would have made a mark upon his time—partly because personality is at a disadvantage unless guided by opportunism, of which there was no trace in him; but partly also because his sense of humour was a little disproportionate; he shrank too much from over-seriousness, and in all his fearlessness he feared his own ridicule and that of his small circle of really intimate friends. He thus kept too tight a rein on any tendency to



EDWARD HORNER



enthusiasm, cramped his great inborn sense of beauty, depreciated his powers, and thought nothing quite worth while.

But it was more complicated than that. His vitality and intense natural gusto, balanced as they were by a great power of occasional melancholy, were too strong to be oppressed merely by a too despotic sense of humour; and it may have been some finer element in him than most of us are made of—some disguised idealism—which sometimes changed his joy of living into a craving for excitement, and turned him away in discontent or distaste from the narrow, humdrum, regulated channels in which the compromise of civilization had decreed that our lives should run. ‘Brilliant, restless, and dissatisfied’—the words have been used of someone else, but they describe him.

It was to Edward that I mainly owed one of my most treasured experiences, my periodical visits, one or two Sundays every term, to him and his particular friends at Balliol—Patrick Shaw-Stewart, Julian and Billy Grenfell, and Charles Lister. These were the centre of attraction which drew from other colleges Ego and Guy Charteris, Sidney and Michael Herbert, Duff Cooper, Ronald Knox, Alan Parsons, Alan or Tommy Lascelles, and several more—all from Eton. I used to think it a pity that they stuck together as exclusively as they did, for it had always seemed to me the point of a University that you could make new and various friends; but after all, they were so self-sufficing and so entirely delightful that you could hardly blame them—why *should* they ‘fly to others that they knew not of’?

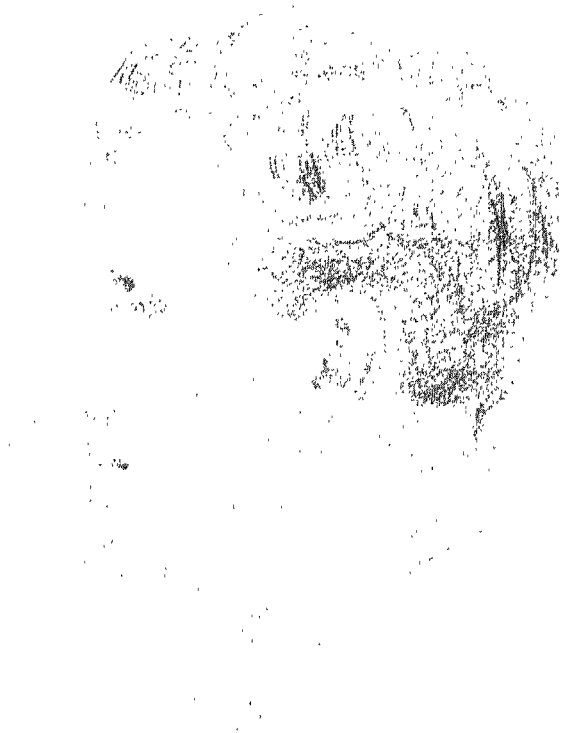
Patrick Shaw-Stewart was perhaps the most talented of the group. He had first-rate brains, and was a scholar at once sound and brilliant—certainly an ‘inheritor of unfulfilled renown.’ Ronald Knox published a memoir of him which seemed too much of a tombstone, rounding the angles and



toning-down the colours of his mixed and strongly-marked character. His face was striking and on the whole ugly, with reddish hair and freckles like the sands of the sea, pale blue eyes, beetling Scotch cheekbones, and a nose so long that when Lady Marjorie Manners was drawing his profile and found her pencil going farther and still farther down the paper she grew, as she said, 'quite frightened,' and to reassure herself tested the measurements with a pair of compasses, only to find that the pencil had been in the right. He was deeply devoted to his friends, and they to him; but to make his surface he carefully polished an authentic vein of hardness and cynicism in which we all rejoiced. When I went to Balliol I was always made to play poker, and once a gentle voice was raised on my behalf: 'It is a shame to make poor Eddie play poker—he hates it and he always loses.' Patrick answered in his most rasping and ruthless accents: 'Eddie must pay for his keep.'

I must in justice record that this principle worked both ways. He used to make my rooms his *pied-à-terre* in London, and one morning at breakfast he tentatively put on my plate a cheque for £50. 'What on earth is that?' I asked, and he said it was for his board and lodging. Afterwards he told Edward about this, and asked if he hadn't been very brave. 'Not at all,' said Edward, 'you must have known he wouldn't take it.' 'I wasn't so sure,' Patrick replied; 'very few people refuse cheques for £50.' One payment I did accept, when in the second month of the War he commandeered my latch-key, with the result that when I got home from the Admiralty at three o'clock in the morning I found the door shut, and had to trapes back to Whitehall and doss in the First Lord's room; as a Reparation for which he gave me my first pair of silk pyjamas.

It was of a piece with his paraded cynicism to flaunt an enormous, impossible, almost heroic snobbishness. He once asked me if I knew a certain Duke's eldest son, and when I said no, and from what I heard I didn't think we should like



PATRICK SHAW-STEWART

*From a drawing by Violet Duchess of Rutland*



him if we did, he answered: 'I've yet to meet the Duke I couldn't like.' The moment came when he had to choose between settling down as a Don at Oxford and going into Barings, and he asked me for my advice. I yearned to advocate the life of scholarship and the things of the mind in the shades of Academe; but no, the world of wealth and power and pride was the one he was cut out for, and I ruefully voted for Barings. 'Oh dear oh dear,' he said, 'you were my one hope.'

When the War broke out I got him, as I did so many of my best and dearest, into Winston Churchill's Naval Brigade. There he made great friends with Rupert Brooke, and in my memoir of Rupert I printed his charming account of the time they spent in hospital together at Alexandria. He survived the Dardanelles, and was killed on December 30th, 1917.

Julian and Billy Grenfell were a noble pair of brothers, two splendid figures of youth. Sir David Henderson, watching them at a bathe, was moved to exclaim: 'Julian ought to be done in marble, but Billy deserves bronze.' Julian had a strain of deep melancholy, but I never happened to be with him in that mood, or knew that he was a poet till I read *Into Battle* after his death—I only remember him as a creature of light and joy. One of my most vivid pictures is of an evening when he dined with me at Brooks's, and danced beaming into that staid decorous dining-room, seized a napkin, and flourished it over his head with a shout of 'Fun!'—all the waiters' faces lighted up.

Billy was rather scholar and wit than poet, and he glowed with a softer light. I fondly cherish a compliment he paid me on an exploit outside my normal sphere. One Saturday night I was haled to the Bullingdon dinner, which as the club was under a passing cloud had to be held in a large barn some distance from Oxford. It was the nearest I ever got to an Orgy. The order of the day was that one might be challenged at any moment to stand up and drink a 'no-

heeler' of champagne; and the diners made a dead set at me. I survived the ordeal with credit, for my score of no-heelers was reckoned at seventeen, on top of which I made, in an erect posture, what passed as a speech. On the Sunday afternoon Billy and I sat in one of the College gardens, peaceful but chastened; and he began in a reflective tone: 'You gained great kudos last night, Eddie, by your prowess in drinking; though I have never understood why so much kudos *should* attach to prowess in drinking, which after all is merely a domestic virtue.'

My first sight of Mrs. Asquith—Margot Tennant—Lady Oxford, equally and deservedly celebrated under all the three names she has borne, was a year or two after her marriage, at a luncheon in her father Sir Charles Tennant's house in Grosvenor Square, to which I had been bidden by his grand-daughter Miss Barbara Lister, herself now deservedly celebrated as a writer under the name of Lady Wilson. Mrs. Asquith came on from a wedding, and I had my first taste of her peculiar tang when someone asked her what it had been like, and she answered: 'The service was *fully* choral.' The mordant tone in which she spoke this familiar phrase seemed to raise it to a final judgement on the 'Society Wedding.' It was my only meeting with old Sir Charles, who was in an amiably choleric mood, and for some reason picked on me as his whipping-boy. When someone commiserated the young couple who had just got married on the ground that they would only have £2,000 a year, he addressed his rebuke to me. 'Let me tell you, young man, that when *you* come to be married you may consider yourself very fortunate if you have as much as £2,000 a year.'

After luncheon my hostess and her delightful uncle Reggie Lister took me upstairs and showed me the magnificent collection of pictures, after which we sat down and talked. Presently Sir Charles bustled into the room, turned out the electric lights, which we, or in my view *they*, had left

burning, and again treated me as the culprit. 'I wonder if you know, young man, how much it costs to light this room with electricity.' There was a good golfing story about him. He and his opponent were just preparing for their first drive when a certain very eminent criminal lawyer dashed up and put his own ball on the tee. The other player was about to explode when Sir Charles interposed with: 'Don't be angry with him—perhaps he isn't quite a gentleman, poor fellow, poor fellow!'

Some day no doubt a collection will be made of the Wit and Wisdom and other manifestations of Margot Asquith, to the vast entertainment of Posterity. She has a unique turn of phrase: 'an imitation rough diamond,' of an American who went all 'Western' in London: 'poor So-and-so! a woman without a roof or a rafter to her mouth.' 'So-and-so told enough white lies to ice a cake:' in a country house she had been shown over, full of sporting trophies, there stood in the hall 'a stuffed hippopotamus on its hind legs, with a tray of visiting-cards in one hand and a bunch of azaleas in the other.' We were discussing the strange fact that a man who is in private life a flawless *preux chevalier* will occasionally in politics do something that seems a little questionable. 'As for——,' she subjoined, 'of course he can't *see* a belt without hitting below it, but then *he* doesn't know where it is.' Asked whether she believed in ghosts, she answered, 'Appearances are in their favour.' Talking of Principle, she told me she liked people to have 'a few bars in their character, very far apart, but *iron*.'

She once paid a visit to a noble family whom I will call the Daubeneys, at a house which had never been brought up to date; and she complained bitterly that the only switch in her bedroom was by the door, so that if she wanted a light in the night she had to crawl across the floor on her stomach in the dark. 'The Daubeneys,' she said, 'don't mind—they all have stomachs like crocodiles.' (The obverse of this was Lady Astor's description of a fabulously luxurious house-

warming at a great mansion to which the owner had been enabled to return by an accession of wealth: the climax was 'and the sheets were so fine that the blankets tickled you through, and the guests woke up in the morning exhausted with laughing.')

As is well known, Lady Oxford is extremely frank. 'You play like a lunatic,' she told me, with full justification, at a game of bridge. We had spent an afternoon seeing the sights of Palermo, and when we got out of the vettura she tried to stop me paying the driver. 'Really Margot,' I said, 'you *must* let me pay—I'm quite rich.' 'You, rich? a pauper!' Lady Bridges was waked by her maid with the announcement that Mrs. Asquith had rung-up at eight o'clock, 'but I told her you had said you weren't to be called before half-past nine.' 'Did she tell you what she wanted?' 'No, my Lady, but I think it must have been something important, because she said "God what a woman!"'

She told me a good story of the Emperor William coming into the room and throwing down an English newspaper in which some sinister meaning was assigned to one of his utterances. 'The more I read your English press,' he said, 'the more I say to myself, Oh Julia, oh Julia, what makes you so peculiar?'

My best specimen of Mr. Asquith is a superlative sentence, or rather period, which he rolled effortlessly out on the humdrum question of the tips which he should distribute at the end of a Whitsun Mediterranean cruise in the Admiralty Yacht *Enchantress*. When we had settled the hash of the stewards etc. he went on to say that a more delicate point remained—the Doctor. 'Dr. — has twice diagnosed our maid Coates, once for ptomaine poisoning and once for cardiac debility—in both cases, I believe, falsely; but the *vis medicatrix nature*, which is fortunately strong in Coates, triumphed over both his diagnosis and his remedy.' I hope I was right in dissuading him from the proposed honorarium.

He had been an ideal component of the party, casting-off all cares of state (in marked contrast with Winston, who perpetually hankered for the pouches and newspapers he would find at the next port of call) and after dinner leading us in such elegant diversions as compiling from memory lists of Shakespeare's plays, the Waverley Novels, or girls' names beginning with M, in which he usually won. He had the guide-book mind in sublimation, and always prepared himself for any sights we were to see, mugging-up his Thucydides, for instance, before our stop at Syracuse, and giving us on the spot a masterly review of the Sicilian Expedition. I won his approval by enacting A. E. Housman's parody of an Attic tragedy on the stage of the Greek theatre at Taormina, in despite of my qualms lest the offended Shade of Æschylus should dispatch an eagle to drop a tortoise on my head. He insisted on going out of our way to visit Athens, for which I shall always be grateful to him, even though we only arrived at tea-time and left after luncheon the next day; for surely to have seen Athens gives a man what Swift calls Invisible Precedence over his fellows. We saw the Acropolis by moonlight, and again next morning, when Winston was moved to indignation by the sight of the columns of the Parthenon prone upon the ground in fallen majesty, and mooted the notion of sending for a party of blue-jackets from *Enchantress*, who he was positive would have them up in no time. The archæologist who had been detailed to guide us pulled a long pained sour face at such an amateurish and in his view vandalistic suggestion; but Winston has had the laugh of him since, for his object has been carried out, though not by the means he proposed, with the universal blessing of all scholars and artists.

Raymond Asquith, by his fixed resolve to serve in the trenches rather than in a staff appointment, left a high chivalrous example which is the one compensation for the loss of so fine a nature, so brilliant a mind. It is lamentable that



A NUMBER OF PEOPLE

he made but little use of his great gift for writing, for the few pieces that remain show a mastery of style and form. His serious Muse, it is true, came a cropper at Oxford, when he read a love-poem to the Horace Club. The first verse began unexceptionably with

There is something in your eyes,  
and the second followed it up with

There is something in your voice.  
Then came the third:

There is something in your hair,  
and the audience detonated. Raymond swore he would never write a poetical poem again; but the fragment of a Popean satire, *In Praise of Young Girls*, is compact of Augustan poetry and wit.

Here is a little squib, which I think has never been printed, on one who had an equal detestation of Literature and Politics:

He hated books, he loathed the State;  
He wrapped his sponge in Livy.  
He put the Great Seal in the grate,  
And the Privy Seal in the privy.

I lent him a book of Bernhard Berenson's on Italian painting, in which the author had put Taddeo Gaddi and Daddo Daddi in their places; and when it came back there was a little poem in pencil on the fly-leaf (alas the book has disappeared, and I quote from memory):

Pity poor Taddeo Gaddi!  
Precious little talent had he;  
Yet we know, however bad, he  
Wasn't quite so bad as Daddi.

He was supremely ready in conversation. Someone asked him a riddle: 'What is it that most men see every day, the

King very seldom, and God never?' The proper answer—a somewhat tame one—was 'His equal;' but Raymond whipt out with 'a joke.' He had only one recorded failure, at a dinner-party where he sat next a non-negotiable woman, and after a time gave her up. George Russell, who was watching him across the table, said to his neighbour Mrs. Raymond: 'I'm afraid your husband is incapable of sustained effort.'

An 'Aubrey' is a Baring expression, derived from Aubrey Herbert, signifying the repetition in a letter to one correspondent of a passage which you have already written to another. This practice is not uncommon in the great letter-writers—Byron for instance—and no shame attaches to it unless the recipients compare notes. Raymond paid two consecutive visits, one in the extreme North of Scotland and the other in Cornwall, from each of which his hostess sped him on a long journey in her motor; and in his Collinses he told each of them that her chauffeur had driven 'with the passion of Shelley and the precision of Pope.' The ladies were mutually unacquainted, and he naturally thought he was safe; but the phrase was too good to let die, and it flew across country on the lips of men till in the end each learnt with chagrin that it had been addressed to the other as well as to herself.

His masterpiece in prose was an account of an imaginary Parliamentary Committee on the Ten Commandments, suggested by the proceedings of the Committee on the Port of London, which he had attended in a legal capacity. When the Second Commandment came up for review, a deputation was received from the Society of Barge-owners, who traced their origin to the Gospel character Simon Bar-Jona, and pleaded for exemption on the ground of long consent and custom. Another deputation was sent by the Municipality of Southend-on-Sea to represent that the words 'except at Southend-on-Sea' should be added to the Seventh Commandment, because adultery was the staple industry of

the place, and already seriously menaced by competition from the cheap sea-borne adultery of the P. and O. Line.

His sister Violet (now Lady Violet Bonham-Carter) is I think on the whole the wittiest and most finished speaker I have heard, and she has all her brother's quickness in conversation. I once took-in to dinner a lady I had never met before, who didn't say a single word to me, so that till half-way through I had to stew entirely in my own juice. To be thus dismissed without a hearing was an outrage, and when I got upstairs I complained with bitterness to Miss Asquith, who immediately poured into my wound the balm of a superb philippic: 'Oh Eddie, you needn't mind, because everybody knows that for want of manners, want of looks, want of brains, and the number of dog-collars she wears at a time, she hasn't her equal in London.' A like improvisation flowed from her when we were telling each other how much poetry we knew by heart, and I confessed that I had very little Shakespeare: 'You must know things like *Out out brief candle*, and *Out out vile jelly*, and *Out out damned spot*.'

At the outbreak of the War she threw herself into the work of the Personal Service League, and when I asked her what her 'bit' consisted in she told me she had begun by licking the envelopes, but had soon provided herself with a wetting-apparatus; 'though it must be admitted,' she said, 'that it detracts from the Personal character of the Service.'

A little before her marriage to Maurice Bonham-Carter I picked up in Downing Street, where I was employed at the time, a list in Mrs. Asquith's handwriting of probable, presumable, or possible wedding-presents, coupled with the sources from which they might be looked-for. The first entry was 'Eddie—Cheque,' and I had a moment of dismay before I perceived that the reference must be to the bride's step-uncle Lord Glenconner, who was my homonym. An invitation to the wedding which had been sent to a distant

cousin of the first Mrs. Asquith was grimly answered by his widow: 'You never asked him when he was alive.' At the nuptials I officiated as an usher—a function for which I was in great request throughout these years; and it was the nearest I ever got to the Altar. 'Three times a bridesmaid, never a bride'—I can't count the times I was an usher, but each occasion must have brought me nearer to never being a bridegroom. I remember one of my young principals, who was marrying a duke's daughter, saying with some humour that he didn't mind how much of the Marriage Service they left out, so long as they kept the words 'Pour down upon them the riches of His Grace.'

Mrs. Asquith's own two children were at the time of which I am mostly writing in the nursery or the schoolroom. If Anthony—who has always been called Puffin except on one unlucky occasion when a country neighbour, writing a letter which was meant as an olive-branch, undid all the good of it by enquiring in the last sentence after 'your dear little Penguin'—if Anthony ever had a mustard-seed of vanity or priggishness in his composition, he has grown-up so uniquely devoid of either that I don't think there is any harm now in recounting an incident from which at the moment I augured ill. At the end of a luncheon in Downing Street, little Puffin, still dressed in short skirts, ran into the dining-room and tripped round the table to Mr. Asquith. 'Father,' he said, 'I don't expect you know who wrote the Overture to *Euryanthe*?' (beautifully pronounced *Oiryuntay*). Mr. Asquith cast up his eyes to the ceiling—his good angel was on the watch—he answered: 'Weber.' Puffin's face fell a yard, but he rallied and returned to the charge: 'Then do you know who wrote the *Juppiter Symphonie*?' This time the angel was taken by surprise; Mr. Asquith said: 'Beethoven,' and Puffin danced away beaming with triumph. I was told that he asked a little schoolfellow at Summerfields if he knew the Nine Muses, and got the answer: 'I only know

Hedworth and Mildred,' meaning Sir Hedworth and Lady Meux.

His sister Elizabeth was very precocious. When I was staying with the Asquiths at Slains Castle in Perthshire, there was an argument whether or not she had a sense of humour, and she was appealed to for her own view on the point. All she could say, she answered, was that now and then she had a mood of thinking everything that happened so funny that she couldn't stop laughing. She had been in one of these moods the day before, and thought what a waste it was not to have had it in London, when she used regularly to sit at luncheon between two dull M.P.s who tried to amuse her.

She undoubtedly grew into a sense of humour about herself, for she related with delight how Lady Oxford had taken it into her head to write to her husband Antoine Bibesco asking why she didn't do more good works, for instance visit a hospital, and he had replied: 'But dearest Margot, Elizabeth visits a hospital *three* times a week, with the result that the lame walk, the blind see, and the dumb *would* speak if they could get a word in edgeways.'

*'But there are forms which Time adorns, not wears,  
And to which beauty obstinately clings.'*\*

One of the chief centres of our circle, if such an un-Euclidean expression may pass, was the Rutland family. I have already mentioned the discussions at which I assisted in my youth, when my elders used to agree upon Mrs. Langtry as the most beautiful woman of their time; and now that I am myself of an age to take part in such debates, I must aver that if one went strictly by the permanent, fundamental, structural qualities of a face, I could never name anyone as the most beautiful of all but Violet Duchess of

\* These lovely neglected lines are a 'cancelled passage' in *Don Juan*, though what possessed Byron to cancel them I have never been able to guess.

Rutland. My younger contemporaries, when it comes to their turn, will probably be voting by a large majority for her daughter Lady Diana Cooper, who in the Parentage game (in which by the way she ascribed my own origin to Puck and Madame de Maintenon—with what justice I won't attempt to decide) was assigned as her mother and father Venus and Voltaire; for she was, and is, as witty as she was, and is, beautiful.

I am privileged to print, by leave of the writer's son, an epigram in her honour by Cecil Baring, Lord Revelstoke, which seems to me worthy of the Greek Anthology:

‘TO THE GLASS OF A LADY OF QUALITY.

In all the world this glass holds pride of place;

Well for thee, glass, tho' frail, thou art not tender!

Else how couldst thou endure, Diana's face,

Daily possessing, daily to surrender?’

(Beside this I should like to put a fragment of a poem by another Lady of Quality—of all the poets who have written about Helen of Troy the only one, so far as I know, to have hit on this particular setting for her loveliness:

‘ . . . I wonder what did Helen see

When she held the mirror up

Yielding to the moment's whim,

And filled it to the silver rim

With beauty like a brimming cup . . . ’)

‘With two sister Graces more,’ Lady Marjorie and Lady Letty, Lady Diana made the most exciting and exhilarating trio that could be imagined, and the recollection of my visits to The Woodhouse, at Rowsley in Derbyshire, overwhelms me with nostalgia. When the Duke succeeded, they migrated to Belvoir, and the Duchess made a tour of the gardens in company with the head-gardener, in the course of which she came upon some large beds of exaggerated, purse-proud calceolarias. ‘We won't have these next year,’

she said. The gardener's reply was crushing and conclusive. 'The tourists expect the calceolarias, your Grace.'

The Duke was a rather temperamental Tory, so that when, according to his view, the wickedness of the Liberal Ministers over the Lords' Veto caused the death of good King Edward VII, I, as the minion of one of them, was for a short time looked upon as a Regicide, and (theoretically) forbidden his houses.

In a season of drought he issued a manifesto urging that recourse should be had to the Prayers for Rain in the Prayer-book. This started Winston Churchill on a playful composition which Swift could hardly have bettered.\* It has never been published, and I am very grateful to him for letting me print it here:

To the Editor of *The Times*.

'12 June, 1919.

SIR,—

'Observing reports in various newspapers that prayers are about to be offered up for rain in order that the present serious drought may be terminated, I venture to suggest that great care should be taken in framing the appeal.

'On the last occasion when this extreme step was resorted to, the Duke of Rutland took the leading part with so much well-meaning enthusiasm that the resulting downpour was not only sufficient for all immediate needs, but was considerably in excess of what was actually required, with the consequence that the agricultural community had no sooner been delivered from the drought than they were clamouring for a special interposition to relieve them from the deluge.

\* The same occasion moved Maurice Baring to the other harmony of verse:

The Duke of Rutland asked *The Times* to pray  
For rain; the rain came down the following day.  
The pious marvelled; sceptics murmured 'fluke';  
And farmers late with hay said 'Damn that Duke'

‘Profiting by this experience, we ought surely on this occasion to be extremely careful to state exactly what we want in precise terms, so as to obviate the possibility of any misunderstanding, and to economize so far as possible the need for these special appeals. After so many days of drought, it certainly does not seem unreasonable to ask for a change in the weather, and faith in a favourable response may well be fortified by actuarial probabilities.

‘While therefore welcoming the suggestion that His Grace should once again come forward, I cannot help feeling that the Board of Agriculture should first of all be consulted. They should draw up a schedule of the exact amount of rainfall required in the interests of this year’s harvest in different parts of the country. This schedule could be placarded in the various places of worship at the time when the appeal is made. It would no doubt be unnecessary to read out the whole schedule during the service, so long as it was made clear at the time that this is what we have in our minds, and what we actually want at the present serious juncture.

‘I feel sure that this would be a much more business-like manner of dealing with the emergency than mere vague appeals for rain. But after all, even this scheme, though greatly preferable to the haphazard methods previously employed, is in itself only a partial make-shift. What we really require to pray for is the general amelioration of the British climate. What is the use of having these piecemeal interpositions—now asking for sunshine, and now for rain? Would it not be far better to ascertain by scientific investigation, conducted under the auspices of a Royal Commission, what is the proportion of sunshine and rain best suited to the ripening of the British crops? It would no doubt be necessary that other interests beside agriculture should be represented, but there must be certain broad general reforms



in the British weather upon which an overwhelming consensus of opinion could be found. The proper proportion of rain to sunshine during each period of the year; the relegation of the rain largely to the hours of darkness; the apportionment of rain and sunshine as between different months, with proper reference not only to crops but to holidays; all these could receive due consideration. A really scientific basis of climatic reform would be achieved.

‘These reforms, when duly embodied in an official volume, could be made the object of the sustained appeals of the nation over many years, and embodied in general prayers of a permanent and not of an exceptional character. We should not then be forced from time to time to have recourse to such appeals at particular periods, which, since they are unrelated to any general plan, must run the risk of deranging the whole economy of nature, and involve the interruption and deflection of universal processes, causing reactions of the utmost complexity in many directions which it is impossible for us with our limited knowledge to foresee.

‘I urge you, Sir, to lend the weight of your powerful organ to the systematization of our appeals for the reform of the British climate.

‘Yours very faithfully,

‘SCORPIO.’

The Duchess’s sister-in-law Mrs. Harry Lindsay, born Norah Bourke, if she had been an eighteenth-century Frenchwoman, would be celebrated in all the memoirs for her gifts and graces: her wit, her beauty, her hospitality, her zest and sunny temper, her buoyant courage, her music, her fascinating scrapbooks and her exquisite art of gardening. She lives on the river at Sutton Courtney, and in those old summers used to have parties called *Allégreses*, when the Manor House and all its dependencies

became one great doss-house for guests from London and undergraduates from Oxford, and all 'saw golden days, fruitful of golden deeds, with Joy and Love triumphing.'

One of her best letters described her first country-house visit in England after a rather hectic winter in Italy: 'It's extraordinary to be here again among all these women with real hair and real busts and real husbands—so different from those boy-dowagers in Rome and Venice.' I have always treasured the reason she gave for not riding: 'I hate sitting-up on the back of a great big horse that keeps throwing meringues in my face.' She once took it into her head to write some extra verses to the poem of Blake's which contains the couplet:

'A robin redbreast in a cage,  
Puts all heaven in a rage,'

but unfortunately the only one I can remember is:

'He who vexes a canary  
Puts the Pope in a quandary.'

After a visit to a film in which Miss Anna May Wong had played an oriental vamp who alienated the hero's affections from his perfectly good European wife, she was asked what it had been like, and answered: 'It was about a man who didn't know White from Wong.'

A friend of mine brought me from New York a paragraph he had found in an American Society paper which was quite uncanny in its mingled accuracy and falsehood: 'Captain and Mrs. Harry Lindsay have been entertaining a good deal at their beautiful house near Oxford for one of their nieces, *and we only hope that she enjoys it*; for the Lindsays have not yet quite acquired the discriminating touch in hospitality. For instance, we were recently present at a party composed as follows: the Hon. Ivo and Imogen Grenfell, Comte Guy de Baillet-Latour, Viscount Gage, the promising young Irish peer, *and* (here one imagines the

gossiper's voice sinking into a shocked whisper) *Eddie Marsh, an actor!*

The Blackwood brothers, Basil and Freddie, were both in their different ways (in a useful phrase which I think was coined by Viola Tree) conspicuous 'assets to the Vortex.' Basil, who must always be remembered for his illustrations to Hilaire Belloc's *Bad Child's Book of Beasts* and *The Modern Traveller*, had a captivating Irish voice and a perfect sense of humour. He told me he had given up trying to make servants get his name right on the telephone. 'They say, who's that? I say, Lord Basil Blackwood. They say, Sir Hiram Maxim? I say, That's near enough.' (Against this I must set the nous displayed by Sir William Dampier-Whetham's parlourmaid, who told her master that he was wanted on the telephone by someone who 'sounded like some London clergymen'—it turned out to be the firm of Metropolitan Vickers). Basil made much the best authentic Spoonerism I have ever heard, for which I must pave the way by explaining that Lady Kerry's father, Sir Edward Hope, was nicknamed 'Blackie'. One night in war-time when Basil and Charles Lister and I were having supper at a restaurant, Lady Kerry came in and said how-d'you-do on her way to her table. Charles, who had never met her, asked who she had been before she married, and Basil began in an experienced and informative tone: 'Her father was a man called Happy Bloke.' He had no notion of having said anything at all odd, and wondered why I burst out laughing. When he was between forty and fifty someone asked him if he expected that he would ever marry, and he said he thought not, because every day he found himself growing more particular and less desirable.

Freddie Blackwood was not so gifted as Basil, but just as delightful. When he was a little boy his father, the great Lord Dufferin, had occasion to give him a lecture; and it seems his oratory was the same in the schoolroom as in the

Senate. As the stately periods rolled on, Freddie listened with growing admiration, and at last broke in with 'Oh, Father, how beautifully you do speak!' which brought the harangue to a close. In early life he lacked complete control of his susceptibility, and once he was observed leaning against the wall of a ball-room and wiping his forehead with an air of relief. 'Such an escape!' he said. 'I've just proposed to someone I don't like, and she refused me.' After a year or two in India, where he had got into some kind of entanglement, he came home a free man and was received with open arms into the circle I am describing. 'You can't think what a splendid feeling it is,' he said, 'not to be in love with anyone, but tremendous friends with them all.' His death in 1930, in a flying accident, was one of the tragedies that don't bear thinking of.

Lord and Lady Wenlock lived with their daughter Irene Lawley, now Mrs. Colin Forbes-Adam, at Escrick Park near York, which Harry Cust said was the only house that never disappointed him, because when he went back to it he always found it was uglier than he had remembered. Lady Wenlock had spent her youth almost entirely at Harewood, so that she looked upon any house not decorated by Adam as a departure from the norm; and when she married she wrote to her mother in her first letter from Escrick: 'This is such a funny house—there are no sphinxes or griffins.'

Anatole France remarked somewhere that the Almighty had misconceived his own talent when he undertook the creation of a Universe, and would have done better to content himself with making '*quelquechose de petit et de parfait—un petit poisson, une goutte d'eau.*' Lady Wenlock was little and perfect, a good fairy for most of her life, and then a good witch with an ivory-headed broomstick. She was very witty and very absent-minded, so much so that once when she started hunting for a pen she found herself looking for it under P in the French

dictionary.\* Lord Wenlock, whose nickname was Bingy, wanted to sell a couple of horses, and had arranged for a horse-dealer to come and see them; but he was called away at the last moment and had to leave the negotiations to his wife, who was fond of the horses and didn't wish them to be sold; so she took the man to the stables and said: 'I do wish I could remember what it is that's wrong with these horses—Bingy would tell you in a minute if he were here.' So when 'Bingy' came back the animals were still in their stalls.

The only drawback to her companionship was her extreme deafness, which caused her to carry about a peculiar silver ear-trumpet, looking like an entrée-dish, or anything rather than what it was. This was a favourite plaything of Fortune. At a luncheon in Florence she suddenly presented it to her neighbour, an Italian Duke, who gallantly filled it with green peas from a dish which a footman was handing to him at the same moment; and at one of her balls in London she left it on the piano, where it was mistaken for an ash-tray, so that when the Prince of Wales took her in to supper and addressed an opening remark to her, she immediately covered him all over with cigarette-ends.

One curious result of her deafness was that she was exceedingly noisy. It was paradoxical to hear a being of such exquisite elegance making a salad or pouring-out coffee with a clatter like the unloading of milk-cans from a train—one realized how much unconscious control the non-deaf must have instinctively trained themselves to exercise over their movements. One man who had the room next hers thought seriously of going to her rescue; but fortunately he refrained, for the alarming sounds he had heard were merely Lady Wenlock going to bed as usual.

High in the 'roof and crown of things' were the Leeds family, who lived in Grosvenor Crescent and at Hornby

\* This trait was borrowed by Sarah Grand, author of the once-famous *Heavenly Twins*, for the heroine of a novel called *Ideala*.

Castle in Yorkshire; and the flower of it was Lady Guendolen Osborne, who married Algernon Cecil, and put out many lights by her early death in 1933. Her charm was of all others the most elusive and indefinable; compounded of many nameable elements, beauty and extreme distinction, wit and humour and an unlimited sense of fun, a certain gay mischievousness, infinite sympathy, and an indomitable spirit never eclipsed by ill-health or pain—but such a catalogue conveys very little, and I will only say that if at the Day of Judgement I were called upon to show one cause why the old order in England should not be condemned but rather praised for its fruits, I should name Guendolen Osborne.

She was one of Rupert Brooke's admirations, and a friend of Virginia Woolf, whom she schemed to 'convert to the aristocracy' by dint of a dinner-party. In this she included me and Hugh Godley (whose father had not yet been ennobled as Kilbracken); and Raymond Asquith was quick to point out the error she had made. 'Eddie and Hugh,' he said, 'are not the aristocracy—they are the official class.'

Algernon Cecil sent me a note of mine which must have amused her, since she kept it; and indeed I think it would be suitable for inclusion in any *Complete Letter-writer* under the heading of 'Answer to Invitation Couched in Imperative Terms:—'

'STERN DAUGHTER OF THE DUKE OF LEEDS!

'As you know, I am the slave of Duty—the word has only to be mentioned, and I am up and ready—so the light in which you have put your invitation leaves me no alternative but to accept it, at whatever cost of personal inconvenience.'

But I must now begin to skip—in the hope that my readers have not anticipated me in that procedure—and come to one of the chief sources of pleasure and interest, the Charteris

family. Their country house, Stanway in Gloucestershire, built of honey-coloured stone, with an Inigo Jones gatehouse, and a pink magnolia tree the size of an oak, and at the back a hill rising to a view over I forget how many 'coloured counties', had been little lived-in during the nineteenth century, so it had escaped Victorian uglification; the furniture was old-established and mellow, and except for the electric light and very good hot water, all up-to-date spickness and spanness had been held at bay. There was plenty of room for large parties of old and young, and it was certainly one of the most enchanting houses to stay at. I remember writing in a Collins to Lady Wemyss that I had come away feeling quite Stanway-sick, which I hoped she would interpret on the analogy of 'homesick' rather than of 'seasick'.

Arthur Balfour was often there, and nowhere did J. M. Barrie seem happier or more at home. In later years, when the third generation had come on the scene, he used to write plays for them to act. In the one I saw, the characters, in compliment to the neighbourhood of Stratford-on-Avon, were all Shakespearean, with a slight difference. Lady Macbeth was played by Guy Charteris's lovely little daughter Mary Rose, who when Simon Asquith as Macbeth told her that she should bear men children only, answered 'I have'. At the end she murdered Macbeth himself, and emerged from the death-chamber, rubbing her hands as if it were the Sleep-walking Scene, and saying gleefully: 'Who would have thought my old man had so much blood in him?' Her brother Hugo was too young to have a part, and his office was to appear before each scene in a suit of scarlet silk, make a low bow to the audience, and draw back the curtain. This he did with great charm and success, and when his nurse told him that night to say his prayers and get into bed he said: 'I don't think I need say my prayers to-night, Nannie—I'm sure God knows I've been acting.' On this occasion the house really was crammed to capacity, and

when Lady Cynthia Asquith suddenly said in the middle of tea: 'Oh Mamma, I quite forgot to say that Goonie Churchill is coming for the night,' Lady Wemyss sat for a moment stupefied, and then went out saying in her lovely clear voice: 'I'm now going up to my room, to find I don't—quite—know—what.'

The master of the house, Hugo first Elcho and then Wemyss, was a gifted, unusual man, but rather aloof from the children's friends, so that I never knew him really well. He was the original of the guest in one of Harry Graham's novels who is told to take the Chinese Ambassadors in to dinner, and only discovers on reaching the dining-room that he has on his arm the Ambassador, in national costume. I was amused with his reason for discontinuing the telephone-extension to his room in Cadogan Square. One morning he had got one of those maddening rings when you can't make out who wants you or what they want, and after some minutes' expense of spirit he found he was being asked if he knew 'where Mr. Horniblow' (the second footman) 'went for his teeth.'

His sister Lady de Vesci turned out when I met her to have been the unknown cynosure of my boyhood, when at the Monday and Saturday Pops I gazed at her across St. James's Hall, forgetting the music. Her daughter Mary Vesey was a great deal at Stanway. It was related of her that when she first learnt the Lord's Prayer she insisted on saying 'My Kingdom come, my will be done', and when she was corrected answered: 'Oh no, *thy's* such a silly word.' She married Aubrey Herbert; Cynthia Charteris, Herbert or Beb Asquith; the eldest son Ego Elcho (who to the eternal sorrow of his friends was killed in Mesopotamia) Letty Manners; Guy Charteris a niece of Mrs. Asquith's, Frances Tennant; and the youngest daughter, always known as Bibs, Ivor Plymouth—none of all these went outside the group, so that when I 'ush'd' for them it was useless to ask the wedding-guests 'Bride



or bridegroom?' as they were almost all equal friends of both.

I hope that as a former member of the Colonial Office I am not breaking the Official Secrets Act or any other rule of decorum in telling a story of Lady Plymouth, who when her husband was Under-Secretary of State gave cocktail parties for Oversea Visitors. One of these was attended by a Sultan from the Malay States, whom she received with her usual cordiality: 'I'm so glad you've come—will you have a White Lady?' The Sultan quailed; he had heard much of English hospitality, but he now realized that the half of it had not been told him.

I have kept for the last the presiding spirit of Stanway, the ultimate source of all its charm and felicity. When Lady Wemyss died in 1937, her daughters asked me to write something about her for *The Times*; and as it pleased them I will print it here, with a word or two added:

Mary Wemyss will always be remembered by those who knew her as one of the last enchantments of the old world. There were never many like her, and now there will be no more. Hers was truly an *indoles nutrita faustis sub penetralibus*, and the conditions which formed her are things of the past. Her heart was as big as the world, her mind as quick as mercury; grace was born in her, and in all that she did or said there was a perfect rightness combined with perfect naturalness.

Her social gift was eminent. 'I can cook a small company myself,' says Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson; but Mrs. Mountstuart's guests were probably conscious of being cooked, as Lady Wemyss's never were; and she would sometimes chuckle afterwards over the imperceptible art with which she had frustrated someone who showed a tendency, in one of her own phrases, to torpedo the party. The source of it all was the bounty of her universal kind-

ness, 'as boundless as the sea'; and the only criticism of her that the writer remembers hearing was from a young gentleman whom she had taken to a ball which fell below his standard: 'Lady Elcho carries unsnobbishness *too far*.'

It is no wonder that throughout his life Arthur Balfour found in her a tower of strength and a haven of rest, or that persons so diversely distinguished as Walter Raleigh, H. G. Wells, Charles Whibley and the Webbs, reposed in her friendship and delighted in her company. All her perceptions were keen and delicate, and no trace of 'highbrow' could co-exist with a delicious element of vagueness and random in her mind which made her speak of the 'eleven-teenth century', or begin a story with 'Last autumn when I was in Scotland I quite inadvertently dined at Balmoral', or relate the interesting talk she had just had with Maurice Hewlett about his new novel *The Queen's Quair*, the point of which was to be that Mary Queen of Scots was passionately in love with Boswell. And a word must be said of her charming cryptographic letters, composed mainly of after-thoughts which raced round the edges of her notepaper till they were as difficult to arrange as the pieces of a jigsaw.

This is not the place in which to dwell on the home life described in her beautiful privately-printed *Family Record*, and rudely broken by the death in the war of her sons Ego and Ivo; nor on the unconquerable spirit which maintained her native sweetness and gaiety to the end, through illness, pain, anxiety and bereavement, of which her portion was not small.

Some who remember with admiration and love the brilliant vivid woman portrayed in Sargent's *Three Graces* may think that the last phase was the loveliest of all: the frail, shrunken, halting figure, dependent on the two sticks which were always losing themselves, and the monkey-headed hot-water-bottle Pongo; the laces and muslin, glimmering with little brooches, framing the finely-modelled,

deep-lined, ivory face in which the eyes of a young girl shone with inextinguishable fun. Her last party at Stanway, only a week ago, was typical: a daughter and son-in-law, two grandchildren, five or six of her oldest friends, and a young writer and his artist-sister [Christopher and Joan Hassall], whom she had newly taken to her heart. To one of these she confided that she did not think she had long to live. It seemed incredible that the end could be near; but it has come, with swiftness merciful to her; and a rare spirit has passed away.





MRS. ELGY

## CHAPTER X

### PERSONALITIES II

Mrs. Elgy—Lord Rosebery—Anatole France—Lady Taylor—Mrs. Hamlyn—Bernard Shaw—J. M. Barrie—Rudyard Kipling—G. K. Chesterton—A. E. Housman—Donald Tovey—Lilian Baylis—J. Middleton Murry—D. H. Lawrence—T. E. Lawrence

#### MRS. ELGY

#### *The constant service of the antique world*

WHEN I count up my blessings, which have been many and great, I generally come to the conclusion that perhaps the greatest of all—certainly the most permanent—has been Mrs. Elgy. Everyone will admit that a bachelor upon whom the Fates have bestowed a perfect housekeeper, cook, valet, housemaid, parlourmaid, ally and friend, all combined in the same person, is indeed to be envied.

I think it was in 1900 that I left home and came to live in Gray's Inn, first at No. 3 Gray's Inn Place, and then, after five years of putting up with the inconvenience of not being able to drive up to the door, at No. 5 Raymond Buildings, where I have been ever since. Mrs. Elgy was allotted to me as my 'laundress', the Gray's Inn equivalent of a Cambridge 'bedmaker'; but of all the inadequate words in the language 'laundress' in this application is to my mind the most contemptibly jejune. A laundress she is, for a time came when she could no longer put up with the ruinous condition in which my soft shirts came back from the wash, and asked

for the money to buy a mangle so that she could wash them herself; since when they have lasted till I outgrew them (in the horizontal direction). But oh, how much more than a laundress!

She is a Derbyshire woman, ingrained with all the old-fashioned country virtues; and as on her birthday in 1938 she was seventy-five, she must have been about thirty-seven when she first came to me, and we have been together for a little over half her life, and considerably more than half of mine. I am sorry and ashamed to own that for some time I looked upon her merely as the person who gave me my breakfast and swept my rooms, and it was only by degrees that I came to recognize her quality. Her cooking, for instance—it never occurred to me that she might be able to cook, and at first when I gave a dinner-party, I used to get someone 'in'. Conscious as she must have been of her powers, I have never understood how she could bear such an arrangement; but anyhow, at long last she did suggest that I might let her try her hand, and the result was a triumph; so that I can't forgive myself for having allowed

'Such capability and godlike cooking  
To fust in her unused.'

But that is now an old unhappy far-off thing; almost always my guests break out in acclamation of her skill, and she comes beaming in from the kitchen to receive their praise. On these occasions she produces an autograph-book belonging to a great-niece of hers, who is in domestic service. One page is headed MISTRESSES—a title which gives rise to speculation in those of my guests who turn over the leaves without realizing that the owner of the book has drawn upon her own circle as well as upon mine for signatures.

Bernard Shaw tells in *Man and Superman* of an old gentleman who disliked society, but gave once a fortnight a dinner of sixteen, complete with Ambassadors, etc., because it was the

only way to keep his cook. Mrs. Elgy needs no such lure to stay with me, but she does enjoy the exercise of her skill, and says when I tell her there is to be a party: 'I'm glad, I like to have something to do.' One of my few reasons for wishing I were richer than I am is that I could afford to give her more opportunities. 'I'm not a posh cook,' she once said, 'but I hope I'm a cook.'

Luckily she almost always likes my friends; her most approving epithet for beautiful ladies is 'homely', which means that they have been particularly nice to her; but this is a compliment which I can never pass on to an American. To all my younger companions she is a mother, and there is many a budding artist and writer in whose biography she deserves to figure. Rupert Brooke was devoted to her, and she to him; and she is a great fan of Ivor Novello's. 'How Mr. Novello does enjoy fun, it fairly beams out of him!' she said on the morning after a supper at which Beatrice Lillie and Leslie Henson had been in form. He always sends her tickets for his first nights, and these occasions take place in her memory along with the far-off evenings when she saw Irving or 'Beerbumptry'. Now she has Christopher Hassall for special spoiling, and when I am alone and she gives me anything extra good she says: 'What a pity Mr. Hassall isn't here for this!'

Luckily also, she likes my jokes. Something went wrong with the Yale lock of my front door, making the key difficult to turn, and I said she must have it seen to at once, because it would never do if I were running away from a policeman and couldn't get in: this set her off in a carillon. Another time I came home from shopping and told her I had been buying a death-bed. This took her very much aback, till I explained that I had slept in the old bed, which had at last come to grief, for over forty years, and if the new one lasted as long it would certainly see me out; whereupon I thought she would never stop laughing.

For a long time I had envied the Rich, who drank their



brandy from large bright bubbles of delicate glass which I admired as Rosamund admired the Purple Jar; and when Ivor Novello gave me my choice of a present for Christmas I asked for a half-dozen of these luxuries. One day when my niece Nancy Maurice was lunching with me, Mrs. Elgy said as she put the glasses on the table: 'We shan't want to break many of these, at seven-and-sixpence apiece.' 'Why should we want to break *any* of them?' I asked, taking her, as Nancy divined, too literally; for it came out that whenever she broke one, which often happened, she had been trudging off to Goode's and replacing it out of her own pocket. This was of course stopped, and now a single goblet remains on the sideboard as a museum-piece and a token that I have known better days.

Nancy further reminds me that when we came back from Corsica after a misadventure which will be described hereafter, the moment came when I had to confess to Mrs. Elgy that I had left my grey flannel suit in tatters on the thorns of the *maquis*. Nancy asked how she had taken it. 'Very well,' I told her; 'she only said: "Never mind—you can buy yourself another suit, but good men are scarce."' "

She has a delightful vocabulary and spelling of her own. 'Frigilator' is a good word, and so is 'Joicey', which is her name for our staple French white wine *La Joyeuse*; and 'Alleluia' cigarettes for 'Abdulla'. And 'vegeatables', which figures in her weekly bill, sounds far more nourishing than 'vegetables'. By another idiosyncrasy, any untoward occurrence presents itself to her mind, as if in opposite mirrors, aligned in a series of repetitive and identical misfortunes which stretches from the Beginning to the crack of doom. Once and only once, I gave a supper-party at which half the guests failed to turn up; and she said: 'That always happens when you have a supper.' I went to Cambridge for a Sunday, and managed to upset myself out of a Rob Roy canoe into the Mill Pool. There was no apparatus for a thorough drying of my clothes, and when she unpacked

them on the Monday I had to account for the tell-tale remains of moisture. 'That always happens,' she said, 'when you go away in a new suit.' Quite lately I went to two Memorial Services in one week, and she said lugubriously: 'All the gentry are dying—all your old friends.'

She takes a pride in my collection of pictures, and has her own decided likes and dislikes among them, her chief pleasure, apart from a deep delight in colour, consisting in the recognition of an agreeable subject. 'I like that one,' she will say, 'it's clear.' I had at one time an example of Matthew Smith's flamboyant and fiery nudes, which she couldn't abide. 'I don't like *her*,' she said, 'she looks as if she'd had a blood-bath'; and I must admit that her repulsion from it made me less reluctant to swap it for a cerulean Sickert. She has a beautiful taste in the choice and arrangement of flowers, and our window-boxes, with bulbs in springtime and petunias and snapdragons in summer, and a pot-plant known as 'The Begonia', are a daily bond between us. She has also a strong love of animals, and her little brown Norwich terrier Judy, who never seems quite sure which of us she belongs to, and our cat Micky, who belongs to no one, but alternates between days of complete aloofness and such soppy affection that I never know when he won't overthrow me on the stairs by getting in front of each leg in turn as if we were playing Rugby, are both important figures in our establishment.

She is always a jealous guardian of my belongings, and when I lost the press of my racquet and had to buy a new one (of the old-fashioned square pattern) she wrote in a large hand on every one of the eight slats: 'Mr. E. Marsh, Esq., Mr. E. Marsh, Esq., Mr. E. Marsh, Esq. . . .' But this is a small instance of the fidelity for which I am thankful every day of my life. When I was about to retire from the Civil Service on a pension, I explained to her that I should have to draw in my never very prominent horns. 'Very well then,' she said, 'I shall have to take less wages.' And when

I came back from Buckingham Palace and told her the King had made me a Knight, she pumped my two hands up and down for a good minute, saying: 'I couldn't have been more pleased if it had been myself.'

## 2

## LORD ROSEBERY

I only met Lord Rosebery once, at a quadrilateral dinner during the War, with Lady Randolph Churchill and Winston. Lady Randolph had, like everyone else, had to give up men-servants, but unmitigated parlourmaids were more than she could quite bear; so she had transmogrified the two fine figures of women who waited on us into what she called 'footmaids', by dressing them up in very smart swallowtails and evening waistcoats, with white shirt-fronts and collars and black ties. Sad to say, my one recollection of Lord Rosebery's talk is the keen interest he took in this phenomenon.

I have two oral traditions of him to produce. My contemporaries will remember a fabulously successful story called *Bootles' Baby*, by Mrs. Arthur Stannard, whose pseudonym was John Strange Winter. The authoress said how-do-you-do to him at a party, and when she realized that he didn't know who she was, went on: 'I'm afraid you don't remember me—Mrs. Arthur Stannard (*a pause*). You know, John Strange Winter (*another pause*). *You* know, Bootles' Baby.' Lord Rosebery disengaged himself as best he could, and said to the next person he saw: 'I've just been accosted by a most extraordinary woman. First she said she was Mrs. Somebody, then she said she was John something else, then she said she was somebody's baby. I think she must be a lunatic.'

He went to buy a new hat at Lincoln and Bennett's, and

having given his old one to be matched was standing bare-headed, when another customer came in and asked him: 'Have you a hat like this?' He eyed it with disdain, and answered: 'No; and if I had I wouldn't wear it.'

## 3

## ANATOLE FRANCE

I only once set eyes on Anatole France. I understand he is now never mentioned in the best circles of the country whose name he bore; but Englishmen have always thought it a weakness in the French to 'turn their trousers up because it was raining in London,' so I can't bring myself to follow the Paris fashions to the point of tearing up my old admiration for this great writer; and the thought that I shook his hand is one of my 'Shelley-plains.'\* The occasion was a dinner in his honour at the Savoy, and I can still see the heavy jowl which gave him the look of a sagacious hound. He began his speech by saying that he felt we must be welcoming him, not for his own sake, but because he was there to represent the literature of France—just as in the French Revolution homage had been paid to Citoyenne Momoro, who had been chosen to impersonate the Goddess of Reason, 'sans être déesse, ni—spécialement—raisonnable.' The *spécialement* was in his best manner, and deserves to be recorded.

## 4

## LADY TAYLOR

There are very few old ladies left now, and it will be a sad day when there are none. My first was Lady Taylor, whom

\* See footnote on page 95.

## A NUMBER OF PEOPLE

Nevile Henderson (now Ambassador to Berlin) in the neatest of blue serges took his stand before the lectern, and in the polished accents of diplomacy led off with the startling words of Zephaniah: 'Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh!'

*Another P or Q* was the choice of a railway-station for arrival. There were two possibilities, Bideford and Barnstaple, and Mrs. Hamlyn, as a shareholder, was a strong partisan of the line which brought one to Bideford. I once in all innocence went to Barnstaple, which happened to be much the more convenient; but never again.

She was very fond of a game of Bridge, which she played in a manner entirely her own. 'One no trump,' she would say: 'I do hope my partner has a good hand'; or, 'If I say three hearts, I wonder if my partner will say four?' Luckily she would never play for money, so it didn't matter much.

She was a great reader, with a passionate love of the good old novels, Scott and Jane Austen, Thackeray and Trollope and Mrs. Gaskell, but with an equally passionate hatred of poetry. The other day I was at Clovelly again, and I looked at her Milton, on the fly-leaf of which I found she had written: 'Bought at Bideford for half-a-crown, to read Comus, because the Stucleys were going to act it.' She evidently couldn't bear that it should be supposed she had wasted even half-a-crown on a Milton for its own sake.

## 6

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

My first sight of 'G.B.S.' was on a Sunday evening at the Royalty Theatre, when he made a speech after the first performance of *Widowers' Houses*. The audience was, in the American phrase, 'not quite ready' for the play, in which the only bullet that unmistakably found its billet was James Welch's miraculous impersonation of Lickcheese; and the

author gave them, in the English phrase, 'what for'. I forget what he said, but I have not forgotten the fire of his pugnacious certainty of himself, matched by the fire of his red hair flaming over his white face and his compelling eyes. The next time I heard him speak was at Toynbee Hall, when he was again blowing his own 'loud uplifted angel-trumpet'. He told us how for years he had been derided for the absurdity of making his professional soldier in *Arms and the Man* empty the cartridges out of their case and fill it with chocolate instead. 'But when,' he said, 'the Boer War broke out, and the late Queen Victoria . . .' He never finished the sentence, for the Queen's Christmas gift of chocolate-boxes to the troops, which is perhaps now forgotten, was very present in the minds of the audience, who burst into such a glory of laughter as I have seldom heard at a meeting.

Soon after this I went to Wilfrid Blunt's sale of Arab horses at Crabbet, which in those days was an annual Event of the Season. It involved broiling for hours in a tent after a 'champagne luncheon', and when it was over I crawled into the train at Three Bridges with a cracking headache, pining for annihilation. Shaw, whom by this time I knew, got into the carriage, and talked so tonically all the way to London that when we arrived at Waterloo I looked in vain for my headache, and realized that it must have fled at his first word.

Neville Lytton and I paid him an amusing visit at a Surrey cottage which he had taken for the summer. He was just back from a French tour on which he had made great play with his first Kodak, and I have never seen anyone so proud of anything as he was of his snapshots. All the lyrical poet in him came to the surface in a pæan on Photography, which in his view was the Art of the Future, destined to supersede Painting just as the typewriter was bound to supersede Poetry. This was altogether too much for me. I was not of an age to sit down under blasphemy, and I had the absurdity to say that I didn't think *Paradise Lost* could ever have been

written by a Type-writer. 'Oh, Milton,' said Shaw, 'that old hombog, that old bag of tricks!' Seeing me go white to the gills, Mrs. Shaw poured out the oil of tact. 'Surely, G.B.S.,' she said, 'some of Milton's *prose* is very good.'

When peace had been thus patched-up, he told us of John Burns's beginnings as a speaker, when he would sometimes inadvisedly climb a height of rhetoric without any provision for getting down again. He was picturing in a peroration the time when Woman would at long last have her rights—'and then,' he said, 'we shall see her exfoliate as—as—as—as we should all wish to see her exfoliate.' For this I exchanged a story I had from Sydney Cockerell of some Socialists travelling in Russia who paid a visit to Tolstoy, and began by alluding to their common friend John Burns. 'Ah yes,' said Tolstoy, 'Jone Bürnss—that exquisite artist!' There was evidently some mistake, but it was soon cleared up—Tolstoy had confused Jone Bürnss with Bürn Jonss.

The Italian dramatist Pirandello was to meet the Shaws at luncheon with the Laverys, and rang Lady Lavery up the day before to ask if she could arrange for him to be photographed in company with the immortal John Lavery and the immortal Bernard Shaw. She thought this rather tiresome and 'foreign', but being the most good-natured woman in the world, she proceeded to ring-up Mr. Shaw in order to warn him of what he might expect. To explain what followed, I must postulate the existence of an actress of the second order, to whom I will give the name of Miriam Fellowes. Lady Lavery was put on to Mrs. Shaw, who when she learnt what was on foot bristled audibly along the wire, and said that neither G.B.S. nor herself could possibly countenance anything of the kind. This reaction seemed excessive, and Lady Lavery, sticking to her guns, got Shaw himself to the telephone and began all over again. When she came to the word Pirandello, he had the giggles, and as soon as he could speak brought out: 'Do you know what Charlotte thought you said? Miriam Fellowes.' The irony of it all was

that next day the photographer was shooting a number of débutantes in their Court dresses, and as they seemed to him more worthy of his art than the immortal Pirandello, the immortal John Lavery and the immortal Bernard Shaw, he didn't arrive till long after the party had broken up.

I was told of Shaw's introduction to an eminent authoress, who found him so agreeable that she wrote next day asking him to come and see her. 'Nothing,' he replied, 'shall induce me to imperil the memory of our one perfect meeting.' When *An Englishwoman's Love-Letters*, subsequently acknowledged by Laurence Housman, was published anonymously, there was a great to-do, and one of the newspapers sent reply-paid telegrams to all the well-known writers: 'Are you author Love Letters Englishwoman?' It was rumoured that G.B.S. had answered: 'Am author love-letters many Englishwomen which do you mean?'

I had a good crossing of swords with him in *The Times*, when he wrote a letter in support of certain pronunciations which a Committee of his had publicly recommended to the B.B.C. announcers. Some of these, such as 'Con-du-it Street' in three syllables, and 'despickable,' seemed to me outrageous, and I plucked up courage to say so. In his rejoinder he took the rather high line of calling me a 'bumptious novice,' and next time we met—but I must couch the incident in dramatic form, as it was an instance of what often occurs in printed plays but rarely in real life: two persons by a common impulse saying the same thing at once:

*Scene: The foyer of the Royalty Theatre. Enter G.B.S. R. and E.M. L.*

G.B.S. }  
E.M. } (*together*) Here's the bumptious novice!

In the upshot the Committee was enlarged, and I was asked to join it, which I must say I looked upon in the light of a vindication. G.B.S. bore me no grudge, and another



thing I 'must say' is that in courtesy and charm and the management of business he was a model for all Chairmen.

When the solitary Act I of J. M. Barrie's *Shall We Join the Ladies?* was given its dazzling first performance at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, it naturally made a sensation, and everybody went about speculating why he hadn't finished the play. Did he know himself how the story ended, or had he found that he couldn't untie his own knot? Someone who was in a position to know told me that he had in fact worked out the whole play before he began to write it, and full of this privileged information I passed it on to Shaw. 'Good gracious,' he exclaimed, 'what an extraordinary idea! Do you mean to tell me that when Barrie begins a play he actually thinks it out beforehand? When I start a play, I write whatever comes into my head, without having the faintest notion how it's going to turn out.' I refrained from saying that from some of his plays that was just what one would suppose.

Long afterwards Barrie told me himself that he had made a complete scenario of the play and fully meant to finish it, but so many strangers wrote to volunteer their own solutions that he grew sick of the whole thing and put it aside for good. If this is true, it is a million pities; for if the whole had been worthy of its beginning it must have been a glory of the stage.

## 7

## J. M. BARRIE

I hope I have a right to count James Barrie among my friends, because I certainly felt a deep regard for him, and once when I had an illness he wrote me a letter so warm and generous that I think I must leave it in my will to be put in my Obituary; but I was never one of those who knew how to

get past his shyness, which of course infected me, so that I have sadly little to tell of him. One walk I remember, at Knebworth, which I call 'The Hundred Pound Walk'—a title adapted from *The Twelve Pound Look* to suit a story Maurice Hewlett told me. He and Barrie and Andrew Carnegie were all staying at the same hotel in Scotland, and one afternoon Carnegie enviously watched the other two coming back from a walk. 'I don't suppose,' he said to Hewlett, 'he'd go for a walk with *me* if I offered him a hundred pounds.' ('Poor little rich man!') On this inestimable walk Barrie told me how he had been asked to write the Life of George Meredith, and given all the material. As he read and read, the story took shape in his mind—surely he was on the road to his masterpiece; but while his imagination blazed, a doubt stole in. Would he ever be able to stick to the facts? At every turn a twist suggested itself which would make the tale more arresting, more vital—what it ought to have been rather than what it was. After a severe struggle the historic conscience in him prevailed over the artistic; he was a novelist, not a biographer; and with sore reluctance he returned the papers to the executors.

I owe to him my second but by no means my last reading of Trollope. I had enjoyed his Barsetshire novels when I was at Westminster; but since then, like most people, I had lost sight of him, till Barrie told me of a night in a strange bedroom when he had needed something to read himself asleep with, but found on the bookshelf nothing by any known author except a Trollope, whose title *Is He Popenjoy?* seemed so inane and repellent that he could hardly bring himself to open it. However, there was nothing for it: he began to read—and sat up into the small hours. Next day I got the book out of the London Library, and found it so entrancing that I went on to read nearly all the novels, either for the first time or again; so that when a year or two later Michael Sadleir earned the gratitude of the reading world by starting a boom in Trollope, I had the foppish satisfaction of feeling

that I hadn't waited on Fashion, but was already in on the ground floor.

I am sure a great actor was lost in Barrie. One evening at Stanway we played charades, and he enacted in dumb show with Lady Cynthia Asquith a husband consumed by a murderous hatred for his adoring wife. Our blood froze as once and again he crept up behind his unsuspecting victim, paper-knife in hand, with a look of hellish malignity, and when as she always did she looked round at the last nick of time in confiding sweetness, jerked his features into a ghastly grin of uxorious fatuity.

Rudyard Kipling gave me the same notion of a wasted Garrick. We were staying with the Desboroughs at Taplow Court, and playing the game of guessing historical scenes. Kipling took the stage with Mrs. Montgomery, and though I don't think anyone guessed their subject, which turned out to have been the High Priest giving Judas the thirty pieces of silver, that made no matter—the point was the impression they created of something on foot that was unutterably sinister and momentous.

## 8

G. K. CHESTERTON

My acquaintance with Chesterton was very slight, but I have two lively impressions. One is of our first meeting. Bron Lucas had asked me to an evening party in his rooms at the top of a high building in St. James's—so high that communication with the ground floor was a matter of time. As I drove up I saw the huge figure, well-known by sight, standing on the doorstep in a huge overcoat amplified by a cape, and groaning with impatience. At sight of me he sank to the ground with the slow enormous resplendent grace of the sun setting on the ocean rim, or an elephant worn out

with trumpeting. 'Thank God somebody else has come,' he said. 'Now *you* can ring the bell.'

The other is of an evening at Pélissier's Follies, when I had the privilege of sitting between Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. They laughed so much that when the curtain came down they couldn't stop, and went on all through the entr'acte, so that the people in front stood up and turned round to see what the matter was, while I sat shrinking and shrivelling like Alice between the Red Queen and the White, or a mouse new-born of two mountains, both in a state of eruption, and feeling, as the saying is, my position acutely.

## 9

## A. E. HOUSMAN

This was also a slight acquaintance, and I can only recall two meetings, the first at dinner with my Father at Downing, when Housman produced what must have been one of his best stories. There had been a morning assembly in the Combination-room of one of the Colleges, at which undergraduates carried about trays of sherry and biscuits. One of them approached an Indian in his first term, who thrust out both hands in deprecation and said: 'No, no, I do not communicate.' My other sight of him was at a festal dinner in King's, when I found I was to sit next Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and opposite Housman. 'What fun I shall have with Q,' I thought, 'but I don't suppose Housman will take any notice of me.' My forecast was reversed: 'Q.' didn't say a word to me the whole evening, but Housman was as forthcoming as his nature and the table between us allowed.

Arthur Benson told me of a little incident which threw a faint but perhaps appreciable light on Housman's shy reserve. Arthur was spending the copious gains of his pen on a new Hall at Magdalene, which was the pride of his life. He

delighted to stand in the street and watch the masons at their work, and one day, catching sight of Housman, he did on an impulse what as a rule he would never have dreamt of—seized him by the arm and dragged him into the building, ‘for to admire and for to see.’ Something seemed to melt under his touch, a barrier fell, and for the first time Housman became entirely human. It was borne in upon Arthur that if people could only take to slapping him, so to speak, on the back, he would become a different person; but I never heard of anyone carrying the experiment farther.

There was a capital epigram, attributed to him by oral tradition, which surely bears his stamp, though to my surprise I haven’t found it among the *Parerga* which have been collected since his death. It was an address to the Muses of the ‘nineties, when the most talked-of poets were William Watson, John Davidson and Francis Thompson:

Ye Nine, behold amid your pastures romp  
The sons of Wat, of David, and of Thomp.

He was also credited with being the second of the two Examiners who heard the ‘blithe new-comer’ on a spring walk to Madingley:

<i>First Don</i>	O cuckoo, shall I call thee bird, Or but a wandering voice?
<i>Second Don</i>	State the alternative preferred, With reasons for your choice.

## SIR DONALD TOVEY

Some first meetings are impossible to recapture: not so mine with Donald Tovey. In 1897 I was staying with Maurice Baring at Oxford, and in the course of a gay

evening someone came into the room with a head under his arm, from which an apologetic voice proceeded: 'Gentlemen, gentlemen, this is not the posture in which I should have chosen to be presented to you.' The head was then released from Chancery, and took its normal place at the summit of a lanky and loose-built frame. I soon perceived that its owner was the beloved and respected and consenting butt of his circle; and when he sat down to the piano and played a series of parodies, which included an imitation of an unaccompanied village choir singing *God Save the Queen* with the loss of a semitone in every bar, it became evident that he was a considerable musician.

Later in the same year I had arranged to go with Maurice to Bayreuth, but his father, Lord Revelstoke, died rather suddenly, and he told me he had given his tickets to Donald Tovey. So far did I fail to 'value right the good before me' that I felt rather cross with him for allowing me no say in the choice of my fellow-traveller—but how wrong I was! Donald knew more about music than anyone else I have ever met with has known about anything; and the only pity was, that in musical equipment I was so utterly unworthy to be his companion in his first hearing of *The Ring*. He was the gentlest and easiest as well as the most inspiring of teachers; the smoking flax he did not quench, and if anybody could have made me into a musician, it was he—I still have an elaborate analysis of a Brahms symphony which some time later in the prodigality of his generous helpfulness he wrote out for my improvement.

When Bayreuth was over, we went on to Nuremberg, and in the dining-room of the hotel found a rather paltry piano. For a whole week of music-making by other people Donald had been starved of his own. Luckily the room was empty: he flew to the instrument like a desert pilgrim to an oasis, and with a heavenly tenderness coaxed its twanglings into the slow movement of the Beethoven violin concerto—nothing has ever sounded lovelier in my ears.

situations in which he can do the wrong thing in the worst way. This theme is illustrated again and again in his poignant accounts of his relations with D. H. Lawrence and Gaudier-Brzeska (both of whom were certainly receptive ground for the seeds of misunderstanding and recrimination); and I think the principle can be seen at work, on a very small scale, in the specimen which I will give.

He has told in his autobiography how he asked me to help him in the crisis of his heroic efforts to carry on his ambitious and excellent periodical *Rhythm* (a title which was changed to the *Blue Review* on account of the difficulty which buyers were supposed to find in conveying such a word as 'Rhythm' to the salesmen at W. H. Smith's bookstalls; but the change was disastrous, for it lost such 'good-will' as had been won by *Rhythm*, without gaining any for the *Blue Review*.) He had an overdraft of, I think, £150, which his Bank were willing to let him pay off at the rate of £10 a month if he could provide a guarantee. This guarantee I agreed to give, thinking that of course if in any month Jack was unable to pay the instalment he would tell me so, and I should stump up the £10. This would have been only a slight inconvenience, and I thought he was taking the matter much too seriously when he hinted, by way of reassurance, that rather than let me down he would make an end of himself.

Suddenly I got a notice from the Bank that he had defaulted and I must pay up the whole £150. I went to see him, and asked why on earth he hadn't told me what was up and let me pay the £10: £150 all at once really *was* rather a bore. He said he had known this was what he ought to do, but he 'couldn't face the shame' of telling me he had failed. This still seems to me quite inexplicable, except on the ground of a hankering after immolation. The disclosure could not by any means be averted, or even delayed for more than a few days: what made him prefer that it should come in the acutest form from his bankers, rather than in a mild one from himself?

But I still return with pleasure and affection to those old evenings in a tiny flat at the top of a house off Chancery Lane where he and the incomparable Katherine Mansfield—Tiger and Tiger, as they rather confusingly called each other and the rest of us called them both—Tiger and Tiger burning bright—kept their heads so courageously, and she so gaily, above the waters of affliction which seemed always on the point of submerging them; and to the ‘*Rhythm*’ luncheons at Treviglio’s in Soho, where the brilliant contributors met and resourcefully plotted to keep the brave little paper going for another month.

## 13

D. H. LAWRENCE

Middleton Murry leads naturally to his great friend and enemy, about whose unhappy later period so far too much has been published that I wish I had more retailable memories of the time when I saw most of him, before the brute War made a hell of his world and sent him wandering ‘like night from land to land,’ never to find rest for the sole of his foot. In the earlier days he had a rich fund of gaiety and sweetness, and though I tried him rather high by carping, with what I see in retrospect to have been overweening presumption, at his use of rhyme and metre—(He called me the policeman of poetry, and I was told he had said I ought to have my bottom kicked)—we were excellent friends, and it is one of my regrets that I couldn’t get away from my Office on the morning when he asked me to be a witness of his marriage. I look back on my walking-tour with Jim Barnes when ‘Lorenzo’ met us at Spezzia, and all three carrying bags, we walked by moonlight through the olives up the stony hillside path to the little house where the genial Frieda was waiting to welcome us.



It is amusing to recall that when I made Edith Wharton read *Sons and Lovers* she told me she would never take my word for a book again—how *could* I have recommended such a botched and bungled piece of work?

When Aldous Huxley was preparing his edition of Lawrence's letters, I sent him as many of mine as I could lay my hands on, and they are all in the book; but I have since come across a few more, which Mrs. Lawrence allows me to print here.

D.L. to E.M.  
25 Aug. 1914.

The Triangle,  
Bellington Lane,  
Nr. Chesham.

'DEAR EDDIE,—

' . . . We have got a little furnished cottage here, quite nice, though I don't love this exhausted english countryside. . . . We are sitting here very tight on our last sixpence, holding our breath.

'The war is just hell for me. I don't see why I should be so disturbed—but I am. I can't get away from it for a minute: I live in a sort of coma, like one of those nightmares when you can't move. I hate it—everything. I'm glad to hear you're enjoying yourself slogging at work. I've whitewashed the house.

'I liked Elliott Seabrooke very much indeed. I *did* like him. I think too that he's got it in him to do some real good work: Whether it will always remain an undiscovered interior I don't know.

'I met — up there too [a Liberal politician who afterwards went Labour]—and rather hated him. He's so God almighty serious. I reckon it's conceit to be quite so serious; as if he was the schoolmaster, and all the world his scholars, poor dear. . . . We are quite near Gilbert [Cannan]: I like him. Yesterday we had in Compton Mackenzie: very flourishing and breezy: a nice fellow, I think,—for somebody other than me.

'I can't say we're happy, because we're not, Frieda and I: what with this war, and one thing and another. But the sun rises and sets as usual.

'au revoir

'D. H. LAWRENCE.'

### The Triangle.

13 Sept., 1914.

'DEAR EDDIE,—

'I am moved almost to tears by the letter and the money [a loan of £10] this morning. It is true, we are in a poor condition. Pinker, however, promises me some money somehow: I should have waited till it came, or have asked my sister for a little. Frieda has always got money from Germany when we have been badly reduced before. Now she can't. But Mary Cannan wrote and told Alfred Sutro and Hewlett that we were very badly off. If I had known, I think I would have asked her not to do it. Then Sutro sent me £10 in advance—that was on Thursday. It sort of came by magic, and I was rather taken aback. But I was glad, because I couldn't bear to be really penniless. I think he was very generous. I shall send it him back when I get some of my own money. And I shall keep yours till my ship is off the shallows again. She is right aground just now.

'Why should I have thought you a bad friend? I knew from Mark Gertler how busy you are. It really touches me very close, when you write so warmly. After all, there is no reason why you should take thought for me. The debt of gratitude already is only mine, between us. Gott sey Danck gesagt—as it says on the little old ex-voto pictures among the mountains—for your warmth to us.

'We live here very quietly. I scrub and Frieda makes blackberry jelly, because there are so many blackberries

this year. I never worry much about money. We need little and spend little, and I have earned my bread and butter on earth.

'Gertler says all your work makes you happy. The war, of course, makes us very unhappy. I cannot get any sense of an enemy—only of a disaster. When I hear of the Germans, it breaks my heart. They must not win, I know—because also they cannot. But they are a young, only adolescent nation, and they don't know what to do with themselves. I wish it needn't have been. Do you think it might be over soon?

'With love from us

'Your affectionate friend

'D. H. LAWRENCE.'

The next three letters were written from Higher Tregerthen, Zennor, St. Ives, Cornwall.

5 Jan. 1917.

'DEAR EDDIE,—

'It now behoves me to bestir myself, lest I find myself merely an ignominious dependent, so I come to you for advice. You know I finished a novel, "Women in Love," which I know is a masterpiece;—but it seems it will not find a publisher. It is no good, I cannot get a single thing I write published in England. There is no sale of the books that *are* published. So I am dished.

'I know it is no good writing for England any more. England wants soothing pap, and nothing else, for its literature; sweet innocent babe of a Britannia! Therefore I have got to get out some way or other.

'Do you think they would let me get to New York? I know I could make a living there. And I want only to get a little connection, and then go away right west, to the Pacific, and live with my back to mankind, for I am sick of it. I want to get people to publish stories, and my

novels, and to write literary stuff. As for the War, I don't want even to mention it, it is such a nausea in my soul. We both want something new, not to have to do with this old mess at all.

'I have got enough money to take us to America, if we could go fairly soon. You know they gave me total exemption from military service on score of health.

'Or do you think I might get some little job, away off in one of the Pacific Islands, where we could both live in peace? I don't want to have anything to do whatsoever with quarrelling nations. If I could have some little peaceful job to do, I would do it and be thankful. But not in England—I couldn't stand it.

'Perhaps you will think this all vague and foolish. I merely want you to tell me if you think I could carry it out at all.

'Yours

'D. H. LAWRENCE.'

16 Jan. 1917.

(After a paragraph about passports for America).

'About the new novel, I am sure it is no good trying to get it done in England. It is not that it is so "improper," but that it is too directly in antagonism with the existing state of squilch. If you like, I will lend it you for a while—the duplicate MS.—though Pinker urges me for it; and I am afraid, to use your phrase, you wouldn't be able to follow it—which means, I know, that you feel entirely out of sympathy with it. Still, you can read it if you like. Whether it is unsympathisch or not, whether it finds a publisher over here or whether it doesn't, it is a masterpiece and a great book, and I care no more. I have written it, and that is enough for me.

'Be so good as to advise me if you can about this matter of our getting permission to go to America. I can't live

here any more. The vital principle seems gone out of the air, and one feels one's soul gradually sinking down, like a lamp-flame in an exhausted atmosphere. I deeply respect Rupert, that he died. But shall we all die?

Monday 29 Jan. 1917.

'Thank you very much for your note and the green form. I hope they will let us go away.

'Have I showed any public pacifist activity?—do you mean the Signature?—At any rate I am not a pacifist. I have come to the conclusion that mankind is not one web and fabric, with one common being. That veil is rent for me. I know that for those who make war, war is undeniably right, it is even their vindication of their being. I know also, that for me, war, at least this war, is utterly wrong, a ghastly and unthinkable falsity. And there it is. One's old great belief in the oneness and wholeness of humanity is torn clean across, for ever.

'So how should I be a pacifist? I can only feel that every man must fulfil his own activity, however contrary and nullifying it may be to mine.

'Duckworth refused the novel: said he could not publish it. But no matter.

'I am getting ready another book of poems. My last and best. Perhaps I shall never have another book of poems to publish: or at least, for many years. Would you like to see this MS., when I have done it? Then, if there should happen to be anything you would like for Georgian Poetry, ever, you can take it. . . .

'If I go to America, and can make any money, I shall give you back what you lent me. I do not forget it.

'D. H. LAWRENCE.

'P.S. Don't you think H.D.—Mrs. Aldington—writes some good poetry? I do—really very good.'

The next, apart from its erroneous prophesying, has the interest of filling a gap in the published correspondence. He wrote to Douglas Goldring from Taormina on 20 July 1920: 'Frieda wants to go to Germany. It is still inhospitable to foreigners (so they say). Therefore she goes alone. And I shall move about Italy . . .'; and in the next letter, to 'Mrs. R.P.' again from Taormina, on 16 November: 'perhaps [I shall] do a book on Venice as John Lane asked me;' but I can find no other reference to this visit to Venice.

Ponte delle Meravegie 1061  
Venice.

13 Oct. 1920.

'DEAR EDDIE,—

'I found your letter at Cook's this morning: also cheque [for *Georgian Poetry*], which is inspiring: had a bottle of Lacrimi Cristi Spumanti (*sic*) on the strength of it, and in the clear, pure, pale-blue autumn sunshine felt the world magical. My thanks.—Frieda is just back from Germany, which land seems to be looking considerably up. Tant mieux. Meanwhile Italy is going socialist, not to be avoided. But I believe, with a bit of sanity outside as well as in, Italy might take to a socialist government fairly naturally—more naturally than anybody.

'We are going to Florence to-morrow—shall be in Taormina next week.—Secker hopes to publish *Lost Girl* beginning of November. I'll send you a copy.

'Hope you're feeling nice.

'D.H.L.'

This was I think the last letter I ever had from him. I am glad to feel that we were always on friendly terms; but as the War dragged on he had drawn away from 'constant connection' with me, for the considerate reason, which he set forth in his published letter to me of February 12, 1916, that

it would be embarrassing for an official to have conspicuous relations with one so suspect. Perhaps it was just as well, for I could never have been a disciple, and he had at that time little use for any but disciples, potential or adscript. I have often wished I could see the answers which people like Lady Ottoline Morrell and Lady Cynthia Asquith wrote to those interminable letters in which he urged them to demolish their mental superstructure and get down to the dark roots of their being. As for me, I should have had no idea how to set about this process, even if I had wished for it. He was too great and strange for the likes of me.

## 14

## T. E. LAWRENCE

I might say the same of this other Lawrence. It is honour enough for me to have been, as I was, on the fringe of his friendship; and I have no light of my own which could add anything to the countless published elucidations of his dazzling and bewildering personality. But I have two small anecdotes of him which I haven't seen in print, and though I forget where they came from they are too characteristic not to be true.

He went to tea with the Thomas Hardys at Max Gate in the uniform of a private soldier, and met the Mayoress of Dorchester, who, having never in all her born days been called upon to sit down in such company, made a remark to that effect in French. Perhaps Mrs. Hardy didn't know the language well enough, or perhaps she knew it too well, to understand what she said; or she may have been too much taken aback for speech—anyhow, there was a silence, which Lawrence broke by saying with the most perfect accent: 'Pardon Madame, est-ce que je puis vous servir d'interprète? Madame Hardy ne sait pas un mot de français.'

On one of his spells in the ranks he was assigned as batman to an officer of the class who used to be known in the War as 'temporary gentlemen.' Lawrence hated him at sight, and on the first evening, when he was unpacking his kit, looked round and said: 'I beg your pardon, sir, but I can only find one of your razors.' 'I've only got one razor.' 'Indeed, sir? I thought most gentlemen had a razor for every day in the week.' After a moment he looked round again. 'Sir, I can't find your left-handed nail-scissors.' The poor man rushed out of the tent and applied for a less exacting batman.

The Lawrence Trustees have kindly given me leave to print the following three letters, the first of which is in David Garnett's edition.

I had written to ask if he would present the Hawthornden Prize to Siegfried Sassoon for his *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, and this was his reply:

338171 A/c Shaw  
R.A.F. Cattewater,  
Plymouth.  
19.3.29.

'DEAR E.M.,—

'I can't do that. It would be to arrogate to myself a claim to literary judgement, on the strength of one book produced under stress of external circumstances. A castaway on a desert island might similarly build himself a raft—without being a shipwright in after life. Writers are people who go on spinning their experiences into books, for sheer love of it, or inability to refrain. It's for this feeling that I wasn't really of the craft that I've stopped reviewing.

'I hope S.S. will understand. I enjoy his work, because it touches nearer to my own train of mind than the work of anyone else publishing. Every verse of his makes me say "I wish to God I'd said that:" and his



fox-hunting gave me a shock of astonishment that he was so different and so good to know. If I was trying to export the ideal Englishman to an international exhibition, I think I'd like to choose S.S. for chief exhibit. Only I wouldn't dare, really, to give him a prize. Some day, perhaps, if I wrote more, I might qualify for one at his hands. Only I have nothing to write, now.

'If that happy day arrives I shall cut the ceremony: which would be rather a spavined ceremony, perhaps, without a prize-winner. I hope S.S. will turn up, this year. It is a very good thing you are honouring him. There have been some good Hawthornden books: but none better than these two. Yet what a horrible ordeal for him to sit there, eating,\* while people get up and say so!

'Cattewater has been very cold, so far, but is a friendly-feeling and tiny camp, with sea on three sides, and barbed wire across the root of the peninsula. I think it is going to be all right. The sea is only 30 yards from my window!

'I should thank you for the honour of your invitation: and shall feel that way about it so soon as it is safely refused.

'Yours

'T.E.S.'

(The ceremony was in the end performed by Lord Lonsdale, in one of the most charming speeches I have ever heard—the flat negation of grammar and technique, but radiant with good-fellowship and zest. Augustine Birrell whispered to me as we went out: 'What a comfort to hear somebody speak who can't!') It was a triumph of the amateur.)

I had bought for I think three guineas a copy of the limited edition of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, but found myself quite unable to get through it; so when

\* I suppose he thought the proceedings included a dinner, but this was not so.

T. E. told me that he had read it twice in borrowed copies, I felt that 'his need was greater than mine,' and made him a present of the volume. He rewarded me with the loan of his book on the R.A.F., *The Mint*, in manuscript.

338171 A/c Shaw,  
R.A.F. Cattewater,  
Plymouth.  
18.IV.29.

'DEAR E.M.,—

'What a cursed shame, to write to you the 25th letter of to-night! To-morrow at dawn I'm due to fly to Calshot, for a day or two or three in the forthcoming Schneider Cup zone: and I saw the vast pile of letters in my locker and said "those shall be answered before I go:" and they are all finished. Yours wasn't a letter, but something very magnificent: Lady Chatterley. I'm re-reading it with a slow deliberate carelessness: going [trying?] to fancy I've never read a D.H.L. before, and that it's up to me to appraise this new man and manner. D.H.L. has always been so rich and ripe a writer to me, before, that I'm deeply puzzled and hurt by this Lady Chatterley of his. Surely the sex business isn't worth all this damned fuss? I've met only a handful of people who really cared a biscuit for it.

'This isn't a letter: it's only a receipt.

'By the way, are you all right (speaking terms, I mean) with Maurice Baring? Because I sent him my R.A.F. MS. two or three days ago, and it might interest you to borrow it off him when he's finished it. M.B. is an amateur of the R.A.F., like me: but he doesn't know the other ranks in it, and won't like their dirt and brutality. In some ways it's a horrible little book. Like over-brewed tea.

'Ever so many thanks for the book.

'T.E.S.'

I did get through *The Mint*, though just as in reading *Lady Chatterley* I was battered and oppressed by the monotonous thudding hailstorm of *gros mots*. I came to the conclusion that the best plan for an author who wished his book to be pervaded with an atmosphere of foul speech would be to print at the beginning a list of all the filthy words in the language, and leave the individual reader the liberty of seasoning the dialogue 'to taste' with whatever selection he thought fit to make as he went on.

The next letter gives due praise to our common friend Jim Ede's *Savage Messiah*, and reverts to *Lady Chatterley*.

## 3. VI. 29.

'DEAR E.M.,—

I've been reading Ede's book on Gaudier Brzeska, in which you appear sympathetically. It's an awfully good book. Gaudier's letters are jewels, and Ede's picture of his squalor and fire and foolishness is most wonderfully drawn. Ede writes as if the pen was loose in his fingers: it's more like drawing than writing: and he gets his effect every time.

The general election means that Winston goes out, I suppose. For himself I'm glad. He's a good fighter, and will do better out than in, and will come back in a stronger position than before. I want him to be P.M. somehow. For you I'm sorry, because this will upset your life again. Colonial Office, will it be? You'll hate that, probably: unless good fortune gives you a quiet chief.

Did you get my *Mint* from Maurice Baring? I've promised the loan of it to one Yeats-Brown, a strange fellow, who's away on holiday. So there's no haste at all.

I've re-read *Lady Chatterley*: three times that is. Poor D.H. I'm dreadfully sorry for a man who's gone right through life and found that it means no more than

PERSONALITIES II

that at the end. Old Bridges, now, has just finished his longest poem, a philosophic poem, and is happy.

'Yours

'T.E.S.'

These two letters give his early impressions of *Lady Chatterley*. The more sympathetic view which he formed later is given in the letter to H. W. Williamson of March 23, 1930, printed in David Garnett's edition.

## CHAPTER XI

### PRIVATE SECRETARY II

Home Office—John Galsworthy—Horatio Bottomley—Sidney Street—Admiralty—James Masterton-Smith—Naval Secretaries—*Enchantress*—John Morley—Outbreak of War—Duchy of Lancaster—Winston Churchill, painter—10 Downing Street—Lady Cunard—Colonial Office again—Ministry of Munitions—Diary of a visit to the front.

A FEW chapters back I left Winston and myself on the doorstep of the Home Office in 1910. The eighteen months or so we spent there were full of events, the Tonypandy Riots, the Battle of Sidney Street, the Demise of the Crown, and much besides; but no one who has read thus far will expect me to treat of these high matters, any more than Mæcenas wanted Horace to write about the Centaurs and the Lapithæ or the Punic Wars, so I will go on with my own small gleanings.

One of Winston's chief interests was in Prison Reform, and he was deeply moved by John Galsworthy's play *Justice*. Lady Randolph gave a dinner to bring them together, and I had the audacity to pose Galsworthy with a dilemma. 'If,' I said, 'the Archangel Gabriel came down from heaven and gave you your choice: *Justice* should either lead to a great improvement in the prison system, and be forgotten; or have no effect whatever on the system, and be a classic a hundred years hence: which would you choose?' I think he gave his mind to the question, for it was some time before he answered, and rather to my surprise opted for the 'classic a hundred years hence.' I had thought the philanthropist in him would prevail over the artist, and I gave him full marks for candour.



EDWARD MARSH, 1910

*From a drawing by Violet Duchess of Rutland*



Winston as Home Secretary brought in a Shop Hours Bill, consisting partly of new provisions and partly of a consolidation of the existing law, which gave Mr. Horatio Bottomley an opportunity to display what seemed to me the perfection of the Parliamentary Manner. Arising in generous wrath, he inveighed against the harshness of a clause which would prevent a poor old woman from buying a twist of tobacco at the very time of day when her need was greatest. Winston whispered to his Under-Secretary, Charlie Masterman, who came and whispered to us in the Official Gallery, and returned to whisper to Winston. When Bottomley sat down, Winston asked rather truculently if the hon. member was aware that the provision to which he took exception had been part of the law of the land since eighteen hundred and whatever it was. 'No, Sir,' said Bottomley, addressing the Speaker, 'I was not aware of it. Nor was the Right Hon. Gentleman himself till a moment ago; for I saw him send the Under-Secretary to enquire of the officials.' (*Loud laughter*). He also observed that the Bill was 'backed' by Masterman, Sir John Simon, and I forget what other pillars of morals, 'not one of whom had ever smiled a smile which would disgrace a Saint in a stained-glass window.' It was certainly Mr. Bottomley's day.

Though I have never been able to see how else Peter the Painter and his crew could have been hindered from blowing us all up, Sidney Street was an exceedingly painful business. For my part, it gave me two new and never-yet-repeated experiences: seeing myself on the movies, and sustaining public obloquy. I happened to go to a cinema, and found Sidney Street on the news-reel. Who was this, advancing across the screen with so much supple grace? It was myself! but instead of being offered a Hollywood contract, as for a moment I had half hoped, I was received with boos and hisses.



Towards the end of 1911 we moved to the Admiralty, which till the War broke out was the most agreeable, and thereafter of course by far the most poignantly interesting, of all the Offices I have served in. My chief colleague and great friend was James Masterton-Smith, always called Masterton. He was already, as he remained, a miracle of efficiency, but perhaps too exclusively devoted to his work; and I used to think he might have developed into a Super-Drudge if Winston and I between us, in our very different ways, hadn't arrived at just the right moment to widen his outlook and sharpen his sense of fun—which served him well when the first time he was put forward for the C.B. he was crowded out, and he told me he would have 'Failed C.B.' printed on his visiting-cards, like the Indian students who sign their letters 'Failed B.A.' Winston prized him dearly, and grabbed him later on whenever he could, for Munitions and War and finally the Colonies, where he stayed on as Permanent Under-Secretary until through overwork following on the tragic death of his wife he broke down in 1924, soon after I had rejoined Winston at the Treasury. It is one of the saddest things I have known that this gifted and excellent and devoted and delightful man, who died in 1938, should have been thus singled-out for catastrophe.

Winston's first Naval Secretary was Admiral Tom Troubridge, afterwards well known for his part in the affair of the *Goeben*, who was a great character, big and burly and very handsome, with beautiful curly snow-white hair, and a comical sense of duty. Whenever anything showed the slightest tendency to go wrong he would brace himself by saying: 'I must think of my Country'—it seemed to be a 'reflex,' and reminded me of an elderly friend of Desmond MacCarthy's who ended every sentence with 'little dogs, little dogs;' but one day when we were motor-ing after Winston to King's Cross and I said I hoped we shouldn't miss the train, he answered: 'Think of your Country, Eddie—that's what I always do;' which

proved that it was a conscious mental process.\*

One of his successors was the great David Beatty, whom it is good to have known in his early prime, with his bright eyes, his taut self-possession, his dash, and his endearing touch of swagger.

Another Naval Secretary had an extraordinary run of bad luck with his monthly recommendations for promotion. Time and again, through no fault of his, but by some fatality, a day or two after he had submitted his list something came to light which compelled him to revise it: one of his nominees had been behaving oddly of late, or (who would have thought?) suddenly taken to drink; another was reported to have made an unsuitable marriage, and one had even gone so far as to die. I gave metrical form to this *richesse d'embarras*, and my little piece had a local and temporary success:

Some Captains' names submitted,  
Some sane, and some half-witted.  
One, to my sad surprise,  
Drinks more than is quite wise.  
I can't remember which  
Is married to a ——.   
One in the churchyard lies;  
But all deserve a rise.

Those were the spacious days, before the Axe fell; and it seemed quite natural that the First Lord should have a 3000-ton yacht (*Enchantress*) at his disposal, and give week-end parties at the naval ports, with magnificent dinners for the local Admirals and Captains. 'Ye little think,' a pitying Devil might have said, 'how nigh

\* Winston's train-catching was always an anxiety to his travelling companions. One Monday morning at the end of a country visit Mrs. Churchill and I were waiting for him in the motor, and she said she was sure he was going to be late. 'Winston is such a sportsman,' I answered, 'he always gives the train a chance to get away.'

Your change approaches, when all these delights  
 Will vanish, and deliver ye to woe,  
 More woe, the more your taste is now of joy.'

I have already mentioned the Whitsun cruises in the Mediterranean for the inspection of Malta\* and Gibraltar, and anything else that might seem worth inspecting on, or even a reasonable distance off, the way: Pæstum, Naples, and Sicily, Athens and Corfù, Spalato, Ragusa, and the astounding harbour of Cattaro. We were always very well 'done,' and one morning on the voyage home Mrs. Churchill saw sunning itself in its crate on deck a turtle destined for the evening turcen of Beautiful Soup. Something in its expression appealed to her, and she refused to let it be killed—thus I suppose prolonging its existence for a week at the outside. Nothing could better exemplify the applicability of *Through the Looking-Glass* to the events of real life. 'Mutton—Alice, Alice—Mutton,' said the Red Queen, and the joint stood up in the dish and bowed; after which Alice couldn't carve it, because it was bad manners to cut anyone you had been introduced to.

The most memorable of the week-end parties at the home ports consisted of Arthur Balfour and John Morley, the two among the elder statesmen for whom I think Winston had the strongest personal affection; and as both were likewise very fond of him, the three were at their best. Of all their talk I only remember one anecdote of Lord Morley's, which I can give verbatim; for in my mind's ear I can still hear his dry, crisp, emphatic, rhythmical utterance. He was for the moment acting for Edward Grey at the Foreign Office, and his Private Secretary told him that the editor of the *Daily News* was asking to see him. He sent back word that he was engaged, but the Private Secretary returned: the editor

\* Fortunately we never stayed there long enough to run much danger from the three classes into which we were told the feminine population of the Island was divided: The Formidables, the Venerables, and the Irresistibles.

considered it imperative that he should be given an interview. 'You may tell him,' said Morley—'not in these words, but in this sense:—It would be difficult, to make the *Daily News* veracious. It would be difficult, to make it readable. It would be difficult, to make it *pay*. But all these difficulties together, are as nothing, to the difficulty of the editor having an interview with Lord Morley.'

I spent the last Sunday of threatened peace with the Churchills in a house they had taken near Cromer. Their nearest neighbours were Sir Edgar Speyer and his wife Leonora, then a famous violinist, whose musical parties I had often been to in Grosvenor Street; so I went to pay them a morning visit, and found Sir Edgar, whose birthday it was, sitting in the sun and hearing his neat little pig-tailed daughters recite a poem which their governess had taught them in honour of the day. It was a perfect little picture of simple patriarchal German domesticity (Jews were then still allowed to be Germans), and I mention it because the recollection of it was one of the small salient things that brought the horror home to me when it came. They were the last Germans I spoke to for many years.

The next Sunday I spent as an errand-boy, chosen for the part because I was a member of Brooks's, carrying messages of which I wasn't told the purport between the Government and the Conservative ex-Ministers, whom Lord Lansdowne had convened to the Club. On the Monday, the night of the ultimatum, I walked Winston back to the Admiralty from the midnight Cabinet, and he told me how the emotions of the event had drawn all the Ministers together, united as never before in a fervour of comradeship and brotherhood. 'But you'll see,' he said; 'it won't last long.'

I was now nearing forty-two, and therefore well past the military age: my 'job' was at the moment, in its small way, quite important; and I knew very well that I should be utterly futile either as a private or as an officer. So it never

seriously occurred to me to make any attempt, as to their honour many of my seniors did, to join the Army. I wasn't then, nor am I now, ashamed of this; but what I was a little ashamed of was not being the sort of person who would be of the slightest use on active service. Certainly there was plenty to do at the Admiralty, and I have never lived such a concentrated life as during the months before Winston came to grief. We began the day about nine o'clock, and went on usually till one or two next morning; and I won popularity by starting a little bar in my room, at which the Chiefs of this or that would assemble for what is now called a 'quick one' round about midnight. Luncheon was a bite at my club in Whitehall Gardens, followed by a twenty-minutes nap, and when I told Winston of this he laughed at me for a dormouse; but one day something impelled him to try it himself, and it answered so well that thenceforward he got right into bed for about an hour every afternoon.

For the first and last time in my life, I only read one book in three months. It was my first Proust, *Du Côté de chez Swann*, given me, to my eternal gratitude, by Madame de Polignac; and I read ten pages a night in bed, with intense delight, till I had finished it.

Funny things happened now and then. Two very pretty girls of my acquaintance (but this was at a later stage) found themselves in a traffic-block, and wondered why a laughing crowd gathered round them. When they got out of their taxi, they found that it bore two placards, one reading 'We Want Money' and the other 'We Want Men.' Lady Juliet Duff went for her first bus-ride, and not knowing the ropes asked the conductor when she got out if she had to give up her ticket. 'No miss,' he said, 'you can 'ave it for a keepsyke.' Mrs. Cavendish-Bentinck also took to omnibuses, but as she was very soft-hearted she always said to the conductor, and to any fellow-passenger who looked unhappy: 'Poor man! here's a shilling for you,' so the economy didn't amount to much.

Mrs. Churchill's sister, Miss Nellie Hozier, and her friend Miss Angela Manners, had gone out as nurses on the first opportunity, and somehow or other got taken captive on the retreat from Mons. Dissatisfied with the conditions of their confinement, Miss Hozier demanded an interview with the German commandant. 'In prison,' she told him, 'there are two things that I always insist upon: one is Bread, and the other is Water.'

I had a very narrow miss of accompanying Winston on his dash to Antwerp. He started at a moment's notice: I was inopportunately attired in a dinner-jacket, and there was no time to go home and change into something more suitable to a siege. While he was away his second daughter Sarah was born, and I found myself a godfather.

But I will not try to dwell on these times. I have no contribution to make to the History of the War, and if I had, it would be out of place in this kind of book. Moreover I naturally saw everything from Winston's point of view, which he has himself put with great force and fullness; and it would be absurd for me to play the *Confidante* in white cotton saying ditto to *Tilburina* in white satin.

Nor will I say much of my private sorrows. Rupert Brooke's death in April 1915, was the worst blow I have ever had, and it changed everything for me. He was followed within two months by Denis Browne, the young musician so dear to us both, of whom I wrote a few words in my memoir of Rupert; and by the end of the War, nearly every one of the closest among my younger friends had been killed—I had to begin all over again.

But something must be said about the tragedy of Winston's 'fall' over the Dardanelles. I was so worked-up against 'Jackie' Fisher by what I then looked on as his falseness that I tore up his photograph, on which he had written 'Yours till Hell freezes'—it seemed that Hell had definitely frozen; but when after a decent interval the ever-placable Winston made

it up with him, I regretted my sentimental act. I had been 'plus Winstoniste que Winston;' and if any reader remembers my explanation of the Baring expression 'in the Antrim Boat,'\* that is where I was.

From the Admiralty to the Duchy of Lancaster was a cruel come-down, and I will leave in oblivion that melancholy summer in which public anxiety was inwoven with this personal misery. Winston had had the chance of his life, and lost it—as he naturally thought, and as I thought with him, and as many would now say—not by his own fault. He was like a Derby favourite who was aware that he couldn't run because his owner had died between the nominations and the race.†

There was one adventitious break in the gloom. Winston took a little house near Godalming called Hoe Farm, and there on a Sunday morning his sister-in-law Lady Goonie, who had come to stay for the week-end, established herself in the garden with her paraphernalia and began to sketch. Winston had never seen anyone paint before: a planet swam into his ken, and on the Monday morning he bought-up practically the entire contents of Roberson's colour-shop in Piccadilly—easels, palettes, brushes, tubes and canvases. Lavery and Orpen let him paint in their studios, and Sickert gave him wrinkles.

Happy his studies, when by these approved;  
Happier their author, when by these beloved—

The new enthusiasm, spurring him to rapid progress, was a distraction and a sedative that brought a measure of ease to

\* See page 73.

† I must let the reader in on a laugh I have just had against myself. Having introduced an equine simile, I was about to develop it, and say that Winston had looked with perhaps too eagle an eye over the stable door, when I found that I couldn't remember what offence it was for which the more chartered horse was forgiven—and realized that it wasn't the horse at all that looked over the stable door, but the suspicious-looking individual. It then occurred to me that what *he* looked over was the hedge, and not the stable-door, which was famous only for being locked too late. Oh, what a tangled web!

his frustrated spirit. His portrait of me, which was one of his earliest attempts, has fortunately perished.

But 'his doom reserved him to worse wrath.' Before the year was out, he had lost not only the Admiralty but his place on the War Council. The nutshell of the Duchy of Lancaster could no longer hold one who had been king of infinite space, and he went to France in command of the 6th Royal Scots Fusiliers. On me Mr. Asquith took pity, and I became supernumerary at No. 10, in charge, among other minor but necessary chores, of the Civil List Pensions.

Here I should like to record a heart's-cockle-warming instance of impulsive generosity. I had got a letter from a distinguished but ill-remunerated poet, whose pension of £50 a year had been raised to £100; but this increase would not take effect till the beginning of the next 'financial year,' and meanwhile he was on the point of getting married; so he implored me to arrange for an immediate advance. This was officially impossible: I myself was at the moment overdrawn, or as near as no matter; and I was wondering disconsolately what on earth I could do, when Lady Cunard, who had been to tea with Mrs. Asquith, looked me up on her way out. I told her of the emergency, and incontinently emptying her bag on my writing-table, she pressed upon me the £26 17s. 9d. which in notes and silver and coppers it proved to contain.

This reminds me of a later occasion when Norman Macdermott, who had for some years been doing excellent uphill work at the Everyman Theatre, wrote on a Friday to tell me that the landlord had suddenly cut up rusty, and would turn him out on the Monday morning unless he could produce £50. I again bethought me of Lady Cunard, who set to work at once, and conjured-up the money with a hey presto. She may not thank me for betraying the secrets of her right hand, not only to her left, but to a wider public; but it is fitting that such 'little nameless unremembered acts' should be allowed to twinkle in a naughty world.



One midnight as I was nearing home I was stopped by a couple of distracted 'Aussies,' who asked me where they could get a drink in this god-awful town. For the honour of the Metropolis I took them up to my rooms, where over their whisky-and-sodas they discoursed of Gallipoli, and gave me their frank opinion of the Generals. I was just beginning to wonder what would happen when they got to Ian Hamilton, who was a great friend of mine, and whether if the worst came to the worst I should be brave enough to take up the cudgels, when they asked if I would like to know who was by far the best of the lot; and when the answer turned out to be 'Sir Ian,' I was as much relieved as I was delighted.

It would be presumptuous in me to give myself the airs of a Jonah, but the fact remains that at the end of 1916 my new Chief also fell; and this time there was nothing for it but to revert to the Colonial Office, where, 'all my glory extinct,' I served for the better part of a year in the West African Department. But at last 'came the dawn.' My telephone rang, and it was Winston, announcing that Lloyd George had offered him the Ministry of Munitions, and would I come along? I went along.

It was delightful to be with him again, and from that moment to the end of the War I lived once more at high pressure; but I can think of nothing to tell that has not been told better elsewhere. However, I will produce one exhibit. I found the other day a diary I had kept of a visit to the front in September 1917, and as it seems to me to give something of the atmosphere of the time and has a few good Winstonian touches, I will print it as a Period Picce.

*Sept. 13, 1917.*

Crossed from Dover to Calais in the 'P.11,' starting soon after 9.30 and taking an hour. It was a perfect day and the smoothest possible passage. We passed minesweepers, troopships, and several naval craft. The young Lt. whom I

talked to told me that the ship had lately got two 'probables' for destruction of submarines, and that last Sunday they dropped a depth-charge on a track, from which oil had been coming up ever since. He didn't see how this could be explained unless they had really got one.

The station restaurant at Calais was quite empty except for us—a very different scene from the excited scurry for chickens that it used to be. We had an excellent luncheon (Winston, Sir Arthur Duckham and I) and I wish I were writing for someone like Alice, who 'always took a great interest in questions of eating and drinking,' and would care to hear of the delicious crust in which the French contrive to envelop their war-bread, and of how nice it was once more to taste Gruyère cheese. The waiter came up to W. and said 'cela fait du plaisir de vous revoir de temps en temps,' and this set W. off on previous visits. He reminded me of one on Aug. 19th, 1914, when we came over with the Governor of Dunkirk, to discuss with the Governor of Calais the possibility of defending the town against a German attack, which then seemed probable. (On that day the station was choc-a-bloc with Belgian locomotives which had taken refuge there). The Governor of Calais told us he had two redoubts, which he was confident of holding against any force the Huns could send—'Mais mon pauvre ami . . .!' the Governor of Dunkirk began, in a tone of pitying contempt.

W. went on with reminiscences of the scale on which we thought at that time that the war could be carried on. Ld K. planned to provide 600 guns—and a Cabinet Committee of which W. was a member raised the number to 4000. Ld K. proposed to provide each regiment with 4 machine guns instead of 2—'more than 4,' he said, 'would be a luxury.' They now have 32 each. W. confessed that he himself at one time (but some time before the war) had visions of putting as many as 100 aeroplanes in the field!

During luncheon we were joined by Capt. Corbett (?) R.F.C. who was to take charge of Duckham—he saddened us

by announcing the death of the greatest of French airmen, Guynemer—and by Capt. Morton, Haig's A.D.C. who came to take us in tow. He is rather jolly, a sort of younger Bend'or to look at. After luncheon we had to hang about till one o'clock. W. and I stood on a bridge, watching the passers-by—first a party of about 200 native troops (French)—they seemed to be of very mixed races—everything from black Mumbo-Jumbos to little pale-gold-coloured men—mostly very cheerful, laughing, jumping about, catching hold of each other. Then came a dreary little party of about 20 Boche prisoners—depressed, apathetic, *hébétés*, only half there—a few of them in vivid emerald-green or lilac tunics—all with P.G. on their breasts. Then came a party of Marines, dirty, cheerful and alert.

We started in the motor at 1, a lovely drive through smiling sunlit country, via Guines, Ardres, etc., to Cassel. W. told a good dialogue between a French Canadian sentry and a compatriot—'Halt! who it is?' 'I am.' 'Pass, she goes well.' Morton told us a fine story of a young airman who on one of his first flights was sent to bomb an aerodrome. He arrived at a moment when 6 Boche aeroplanes were just ready to start—they all went up, he did—in all 6, one after the other, discharged the rest of his bombs on the sheds, and returned unhurt.

At Cassel—a lovely little town on a solitary hill in the plain—we picked up a gunner, Capt. Turville (?), who was to take us to the battle country. We went on through Caestre, Flêtre and Bailleul, to the ruined but not demolished village of Kemmel—passing artillery parks, camouflé'd tents, pontoons, a notice-board of an 'Unexploded Mine'—masses of troops on the march—two groups of aeroplanes flew over us, and we saw a triplane in the air. At last we got to Wytschaete Ridge, where we put on steel helmets and got out behind a long fence of trellis-work hung with strips of cloth to look like foliage. We had been told that Messines was 'unhealthy' so we didn't go there, and preferred Wytschaete

which was reported 'quiet.' But no sooner did we begin to walk along the Ridge than 6in. shells began to burst around us. One of our batteries must have been firing at the Huns yesterday or this morning, and they were trying for their revenge. Columns of smoke rose from the ground, 60-100 yards from us, and bits of shell fell quite close—5 or 6 yards off—while all the time our own shells were whistling and shrieking over our heads.

I was rather surprised at not feeling the least frightened—the only thing was that I was a tiny bit self-conscious, and perhaps a little unnecessarily anxious to keep up the conversation for fear the others should think I was rattled! The landscape was extraordinary. There was a sudden line of demarcation between the fertile wooded country we had been driving through, and a tract of land where there was nothing but the black naked trunks of trees, with all their branches broken off short. The ground was practically all shell-holes, filled with water, and their edges all grown over already with vegetation, mostly a vigorous plant with flowers composed of masses of pink buds, which I happen to know is called *persicaria*. We found a fairly sheltered place, a few yards from a heap of red bricks, all that is left of Wytschaete Church, which I saw in March 1915, from the top of Kemmel Hill, when it was still recognizable as a Church. Winston lent me his excellent field-glasses, through which I could see the emplacement of the Boche lines, about 3000 yards off in the plain—and several towns, including the utter ruin of Ypres, where I could make out no trace of the Cloth Hall or of the Cathedral.

W. soon began to think it was silly to stay there, and we started picking our way back through the stumps and round the shell-holes of Wytschaete Wood. The shells were still falling, all in a radius of about 150 yards—we saw one burst about 30 yards in front of a huge lorry packed with troops, which went on as if nothing had happened. On the way I turned aside to see the Medelstad Farm crater—one of the

smaller craters produced by the mines on the morning of the Messines battle. It is about 100 yards across, and looked gigantic. We got into the motor again and drove back the way we had come. What with having got up at 6.30 after 5 hours' sleep—the sea journey—a huge luncheon—no tea—and perhaps the reaction from having been under fire—I was very sleepy and kept dropping off all the way to St. Omer.

G.H.Q. is an ugly modern château, in nice green grounds with a pond and a little river. Sir Douglas doesn't 'do himself' so well as Lord French did, when we stayed with him at St. Omer. There is no champagne here, the house is very cold, and the rear doesn't lock! I sat at dinner between Generals Birch, Artillery Assistant to C. in C., and Kiggell, Chief of General Staff, the others were Gen. Butler, D.C.G.S., Col. Fletcher and Capt. Straker, and Haig, a nephew of the F.M. There is nothing externally remarkable in Sir Douglas—nothing in his presence or countenance to make one think he is anything beyond the usual; and he is very quiet—not a talking animal. Winston didn't get going, and dinner was dull, especially at first. Later on there was a rather interesting discussion, about tanks, and the possibilities of a huge aerial offensive next year. Haig thinks highly of tanks, in their proper place. He told us of a little enterprise of Gen. Maxse's which would normally have cost 600–1000 casualties—but owing to the tanks there were only 15. Curious news came from Paris by telephone after dinner. Painlevé, after refusing to join Ribot's Ministry because there were no Socialists, has himself formed a Government without a single Socialist in it! and Ribot is his Minister of Foreign Affairs. We shall get more light on this in Paris. Thomas, the Socialist Minister of Munitions, is out—which is a nuisance, as W.'s object in going to Paris was to discuss steel and nitrates with him. I am sorry for Loucheur, the new Minister of Munitions (whom no one has ever heard of), he will have to spend most of his third day of taking up office in discussing these knotty points with his English

opposite number—and such an opposite number! What fun men have!

*Thursday, Sept. 14.*

This has been a dull day. We didn't go out till 4—when we started (F.E. and Winston in one car, and Valentine Castlerosse and I in another) to drive via Cassel, Steenvoorde and Abeele (where W. and I and Morton parted company with the other two) to the Headquarters of the 1st Anzac Corps, about 2 miles South of Poperinghe. H.Q. is a little quadrangle of wooden huts round a lettuce and cabbage garden—each general has a little cabin to himself, looking exactly like an out-of-doors earth-closet, with his name painted on the door—the whole establishment most Spartan. Jack Churchill is Camp Commandant, which was why we went. There was a serio-comic little ceremony going on—presentation to Gen. Birdwood by the Comforts Association of an *enormous* crimson satin banner, with white stars representing the Southern Cross (looking quite as groggy as the original) and the Union Jack in the corner. Everybody was properly solemn about it. We had tea with Jack and Birdwood's Australian A.D.C., who wore a bush-ranging hat and talked about the Hun's litest game. We left very soon, and Winston's comment was 'Jack is an extraordinary fellow—quite unborable.' I had a sympathetic talk with Morton about the Russian ballet and opera—in the old days he had a box for all of them—we agreed about everything.

The only interesting things we saw on the way back were a little cemetery, packed tight with I should think 2000 crosses, and a stack of spare crosses just outside, waiting for the next push—and camps of tents with layers of sandbags round their bases. This is to cope with the newest form of bomb—it ends in a stick, which hits the ground first and explodes the bomb laterally while it is still in the air, so that the fragments spread and but for the sandbags would kill anyone sleeping near them. We passed the Durham Light Infantry, York-

shires, and Northumberland Fusiliers, who were marching to the trenches on Divisional relief. Many of them recognized Winston and cheered and waved their hands—he was as pleased as Punch.

I sat at dinner between Louis Botha (General Botha's son) and Philip Sassoon who had just come back from Paris—I had a feverish London talk with him.

*Friday Sept. 15th.*

Another uneventful day. I had a good walk with Philip in the morning on Helfaut Ridge—and spent the afternoon, after an unsuccessful attempt to see Millie Sutherland, hanging about till Winston was ready. He meant to start at 4.15, but his conferences etc. went on till nearly 7—so we didn't get to Amiens till 9.30.

It was a pity we were at G.H.Q. for *quite* such a quiet time (though we should have been more in the way if more had been going on). Even so I was much struck by the ease and serenity with which Haig carries his burden—I am sure he is quite imperturbable. He and W. seemed to warm to one another as the visit went on, and at our last luncheon Haig was quite genial and cracked several jokes. Philip says the passion of his life is for being talked to, but that he combines this with a fatal propensity to nip topics in the bud. The tone of G.H.Q. is tremendously optimistic—so much so that I found other people were quite irritated. Kiggell told me he thought the Boches were in the position of a man who is clinging with his fingers to the edge of a precipice—and they evidently all think that if only we can get a spell of good weather we can do wonders, even this year.

At Amiens (Hôtel du Rhin) we found Neville Lytton, whose job is looking after the foreign correspondents. He told me the papers said Korniloff was definitely downed by Kerensky—which filled W. with the most gloomy ideas.

*Saturday Sept. 16th.*

Like Mrs. Micawber, I felt that 'having come so far, it would be rash not to see the Cathedral'—so I rushed round before breakfast. I had only 5 minutes there, but in a sense it was enough. I hadn't for a long time seen anything of that kind—of that majestic and overwhelming beauty—and it was 'a bit much.'

We started at 10.15 for Arras. There was nothing much to notice (except German prisoners working by the roadside<sup>29</sup>—and farther on some native labour contingents) till we got to Albert—but from the moment I caught sight of the Virgin in her arrested fall, the day was a succession of thrills. The Virgin is curiously moving. She's nothing in herself, the battered church is a hideous and vulgar building, and she gives the tower the shape of a fool's cockscomb. Yet her position is so evidently a miracle—the edge of her pedestal has somehow just caught in the parapet, and there she stays month in and month out in the very act of her headlong dive—one feels it *must* be an omen.

For a few minutes beyond Albert the country is still country—I saw an untouched bend of the Ancre, flowing through grass meadows among poplars and willows. Then comes a sudden change—the land becomes featureless and unmeaning, like the face of a leper—(a leper with smallpox as well, for it's all pitted with shell-holes). Coarse grass and weeds have sprung up everywhere, so the unimaginable desolation one used to read about has passed off—but there are still the lines of bare tree trunks with their stumps of boughs—and *everywhere* the tiny nameless white crosses, single or in clusters, 'like snowdrops' as Winston said—and here and there a regular cemetery with larger named crosses. Of the smaller villages, such as Pozières, not a trace remains (just a fragment of wall, 4 feet high, which was once the Château de Pozières). We passed the crater of La Boisselle, where the German lines began—and the white mound of the Butte de Warlencourt—and then came to Bapaume, which



looks as if some one had crumpled it up and torn it into little bits, meaning to throw it into the waste-paper-basket. Then we turned to the left, and drove on through a succession of camps and disembowelled villages till we came to Arras, which still keeps the semblance of a town, though hardly a house is untouched. Neville and I dropped W. at the headquarters of the 15th Army Corps, where he had a conference with two gas experts, Generals Thuillier and Fowkes, and we went on to the Pimple on Vimy Ridge. The view from here is wonderful. Looking North, one has the ruins of Mont St. Éloi on the left, and on the right, in the extreme distance, the towers of Douai. In between, the whole field of the Lens battles—Lens itself a complete ruin, the block of its church tower very distinct in the sunlight; Hill 65, Hill 70, all the *Cités* or mining establishments—some quite shattered, others with their tall red chimneys and iron towers still standing. The whole countryside is covered with red towns, Liévin, Salournies, etc.—as thickly almost as the parts round Manchester (Loos was just hidden by Hill 70). Nowhere a trace of humanity, except one or two Tommies walking about in the Bois des Hirondelles round a battery which the Boches were trying to shell. Crumps burst every now and then, but as it was the luncheon hour, which both sides take easy, there wasn't very much to see in that line. After about half an hour Neville and I went back to H.Q., where we found Winston lunching with the Generals, in a tunnel-shaped tin hut. W. then started on foot to visit his old Regiment, the R.S.F., who were close by, and Neville and I motored into Arras. The Cathedral there makes a fine ruin—no doubt it's better now than before, as it was an uninteresting classical building, but the broken masses are fine. The Grande Place and the Petite Place are still charming and can probably be restored. The houses are Spanish-Flemish, all on much the same pattern, but irregular in size and detail—all gabled, with rounds at the top and corners of the gables, and arched colonnades at the bottom on the street, which

make them look as if they were holding up their skirts. While we were there, two Boche aeroplanes appeared in the sky, attacked by Archies, but without result, except the tiny puffs of white smoke calmly appearing and floating in the blue sky. Neville told me an excellent saying about Archies—'Il y a trois choses inutiles—les têtons de l'homme, les c— du Pape, et les canons contre les avions.'

We went back to H.Q. where Winston joined us at 4.15, so we were already about two hours late in starting. And we hadn't gone far before he was attracted by the sight of shells bursting in the distance. This, we were told, was a daylight raid on Chérisy—irresistible!—out we got, put on our steel helmets, hung our gas-masks round our necks, and walked for half an hour towards the firing—there was a great noise, shells whistling over our heads, and some fine bursts in the distance—but we seemed to get no nearer, and the firing died down, so we went back after another hour's delay. W.'s disregard of time, when there's anything he wants to do, is sublime—he firmly believes that it waits for him.

We drove back on the same road as far as Bapaume, and then straight on through Le Transloy, Sailly-Saillisel (of which not a trace remains)—to Péronne, which must have been a lovely little place. The sunset light, when we got there soon after six, was the loveliest I've ever seen—and the ruins, softened and glowing in its warmth and sweetness, were unutterably pathetic.

Here Neville left us—and at last we got away from what had seemed the endless battlefield of the Somme. But till dark and after, the road was still through devastated country, the scenes of earlier and obscurer French fighting—branches shot down from the trees, and ruined houses. Our chauffeur didn't know the way, and his map soon stopped, so we were constantly going wrong, and having to ask and turn back—but at long last we did get to Paris—by about 10.30. I was as tired as I've ever been, and got sleepier and sleepier over

our little dinner at the Ritz, with Freddie Guest, Capt. Spears, and Layton talking to us—I was damned glad to be allowed to go to bed soon after midnight.

*Sunday, Sept. 17.*

Servants have a terrible power. Nash, who had gone to bed without asking when to call us, woke me at *eight* with tea! On a Sunday too. And the post hadn't even come, which would have made it worth while—as about 10 o'clock a charming letter appeared from Ivor! Winston went to see General Foch, who is now Chief of the Staff—and I read official papers. We lunched at one, with Freddie and Spears and Adams, The *Times* correspondent, who is a delightful man and knows more about French politics than anyone else. He gave a bad account of them. The Union Sacrée (now called the Sacrée Union) is utterly dead, and it's all relapsed into the old game of chess between self-seeking and unscrupulous politicians. Adams gives Painlevé about four months as Prime Minister—the other possible claimants are all content to stand aside and give him rope for that time—all hoping to come in at the psychological moment and be the Premier who will end the war! The American Winston Churchill came and sat with the English one for coffee—but I didn't talk to him. In the afternoon W. had a long talk with Painlevé which went well.

We dined at the Ambassadeurs with Freddie Guest and Tony Drexel. The law is that everyone must leave restaurants by 9.30, but owing to our great distinction and Drexel's wealth we were allowed to stay till ten—but then they began turning the lights out, and told us 'c'est trop sortir de la loi', and even *we* had to go. Another sign of the War is that the hot water is cut off in the hotels from 10 a.m. on Monday till Saturday evening (so we chose our day for coming here rather luckily!). There are meatless days—and two tealess days a week, and the war-bread is not very nice, and makes many people very ill. Otherwise the food is as good and

plentiful as ever, but *terrifically* expensive. Luckily we are the guests of the French Government.

*Monday, 18th.*

We went at 9 a.m. to a conference with Loucheur, Ministre de L'Armement, who is established in an hotel in the Champs Élysées. He is a brisk little man with a spaniel's button nose, very business-like and capable. Winston lunched with Painlevé—Lord Derby and my brother-in-law Fred Maurice turned up from the Italian front and had long talks with him. Fred gave me great accounts of the Italians. We dined with Drexel and two crimson-faced Americans, at his house in the Avenue du Bois. Most entertaining. He told us of an old letter he had found to-day, from King —, thanking him for lending him 20,000 francs to pay off an awful old woman he had been living with in Paris. W. very eloquent on the necessity of bringing every possible American soldier over to France as soon as possible, and training them here or in England instead of in America—so as not to waste transport during the time of training. Drexel much impressed, and promised to pass it all on to Pershing. He told me that Nijinsky had been released from internment in Austria and allowed to go and dance in America by the good offices of the Pope! The best thing he has done in the war.

*Tuesday, 19th.*

Left Paris after luncheon and drove through Chantilly and Compiègne, the junction of the Aisne and the Oise, which Lord French used always to speak of as 'Compienny, the junction of the Iny and the Wheeze,' to Pierrefonds (monstrous Château) where Winston had a long talk with Gen. Bua, an old friend and now one of the best French Generals, about heavy artillery on railways—I meanwhile having a more than sticky conversation with a French Colonel, in French, on the same topic. We then motored via Chelles and Attichy to Noyon—the scenery of the Aisne valley, till

about Attichy, was most lovely and peaceful—then we came to the trench-warfare scenery—blasted like the Somme, but now all overgrown with all sorts of wild flowers. The villages in this part, Tracy-le-Mont, Tracy-le-Val, Carlepont, etc., are all destroyed, but their shells are left standing—their day came in the earlier stages, when houses were only shattered, not razed. We got to Amiens at 8.30. After dinner Neville Lytton brought us Mr. Asquith and Bongie, with whom he had dined. Neville had a very improper story of some French officers, who were discussing what they would do when first they got into a German town—they would at once ravish all the Gretchens. One officer dissented—‘Non,’ he said, ‘je ne ferai pas ça.’ ‘Voyons donc,’ said the others, ‘nous te connaissons—tu feras comme les autres.’ He persisted that he would not. ‘J’ai mon petit système à moi.’ Urged to say what his system was—(I’m afraid I can’t print this, even in French; but it was to the effect that he would choose the most beautiful of the Gretchens, raise her hopes to the highest pitch, and then disappoint them).

I told this afterwards to W., he was much shocked, and in order to lead the conversation gradually back to more decorous lines, he told me a tale of two lady farm-workers, who in the course of their duties had to take a bull to a cow. The farmer thought it rather a delicate matter—also perhaps rather difficult for them, but they were so confident that he let them try. They came back looking very discomfited, and with an air of failure, excusing themselves by saying that they could *not* get the wretched cow to lie on her back.

Neville said he had told some of his foreign journalists that I had wept on seeing the ruins of Péronne—and they said ‘nous avons mal compris les Anglais’—so my bad habit of facile tears has contributed to the Entente!

Mr. Asquith was much amused by an Army Order which he had actually seen in print, to the effect that the Portuguese

were not to be referred to as Ruddy Geese, but as Our Ancient Allies.

Next day we started at 8.30, with Captain Hall as bear-leader. We motored to Albert, and on to Arras on the other bank of the Ancre, so as to pass the scene of Freyberg's exploit at Beaucourt. We walked over part of the ground, all rank with weeds and wild flowers, and with bits of barbed wire everywhere. There are gangs of Chinkies clearing it up, but I 'doubt if they will ever get it clear.' An infinitely touching little cemetery of about 600 graves, Naval Brigade and others, the names stamped on little plates of tin. The blasted wood of Thiepval is on the other side of the river.

After Arras we went along the Souchez road. There was a notice up that it wasn't to be used by daylight, but no one pays any attention to this. There was a certain amount of shelling in the distance, but nothing came close to us. We went on via Béthune, Steenwerck, etc., to General Tom Bridges' H.Q. at the Scherpenberg, where we lunched. He has an extremely good band, which we found playing Elgar's variations on Three Blind Mice, also a tame lion-cub aged nine months, a delightful creature which loves walking between one's legs to rub its fur. While we were at luncheon an order came from above that he mustn't keep it any longer, so it will be sent to the Zoo.

The Scherpenberg is the sister-hill to Kemmel—not so large, and about five miles to the West. They are the only hills for miles and command magnificent views. At three o'clock there was to be a Corps barrage, in preparation for to-morrow's battle. We went up and watched it from the windmill at the top of the hill. The windmill is in full work, and felt exactly like being on a ship at sea. The old Belgian miller kept coming up and down past us and giving orders in shrill uncouth Flemish. In a field at the foot of the hill a man was calmly ploughing, and about two miles farther off the barrage was going on. Punctually at three there was a line of flashes on a long front, from just beyond Ypres on

the left to Kemmel on the right. We couldn't hear the guns, as the wind was the wrong way—but the whole country beyond the line of flashes became veiled in what looked just like a desert sand-storm, dotted with great bursts of black or white smoke, in the air or on the ground. The Huns answered, but not very vigorously. Both sides sent up 'sausages', till there were eight or nine in the air, and a few aeroplanes went up, but not nearly so many as I expected, and I was disappointed that they didn't attack the sausages . . .

For some reason which I can't remember, I wrote no more.

## CHAPTER XII

### MOVING ACCIDENTS BY FLOOD AND FIELD

Of these there are only two, so they must be made the most of.

#### I

### THE RHINOCEROS HUNT

**B**EFORE I started with Winston Churchill, towards the end of 1907, on the African journey which has already been narrated, I asked Mrs. Patrick Campbell what she would do if she heard I had been eaten by a lion; and she admitted that she would laugh first, and then be very very sorry.

I took to Africa at once: 'the moment we arrived,' as Winston picturesquely put it, 'Eddie stripped himself naked and retired to the Bush, from which he could only be lured three times a day by promises of food.' This was no more than a slight exaggeration, and I am afraid I pained our kind hostess at Nairobi, Lady Hayes-Sadler, by entering my 'Occupation' in the Government House Visitors' Book as 'Bushranger'. But alas for the poor Bushranger, he was wanting in the first element of his business—he had never had a gun in his hands.

It is all very well to say: *Caelum, non animus, mutant qui trans mare currunt*; I only know two things, that under the African heavens I immediately lost my taste for Egyptian cigarettes, and could only smoke 'gaspers' till I got back to the Temperate Zone, where luckily this hideous tropical perversion lost its hold; and that for the first and last time in my life I was seized, through the influence of environment, with a passionate desire to kill animals—never again could



I pique myself on my immunity from the lust of blood. But Winston wouldn't hear of my having a rifle: I might shoot *him*, and that would never do.

Thus it came to pass that on the first day which could be set aside for sport, I marched forth on the Athi Plains equipped, like Tweedledee, with nothing but a white umbrella. The sun blazed, the ground was undulating and scrubby, far away in the distance the august mountain Kilimanjaro shone in the upper air like a vast celestial mould of Christmas pudding streaked with frozen rivers of brandy-butter. The first game we started was a noble oribi, the most graceful antelope I saw on the journey; and the native hunters crept noiselessly forward in line up a gentle acclivity, while we followed with all the stealthiness at our command. At the top, the natives paused and stiffened with excitement, pointing at something beyond; then turned to us, whispering the formidable word *Faro, Faro* (Rhinoceros). We hurried up, the oribi quite forgot, and a hundred yards away in a wide bare open plain perceived a female Rhinoceros asleep under a solitary tree. After hasty consultations and suitable manœuvres for getting right with the wind, Winston fired. The Rhinoceros leapt to her feet and rushed towards us, or rather as I felt towards *me*, pounding along like a runaway railway-engine. 'What should A do?' I stood my ground, with my finger on the trigger of my umbrella, planning as a Happy Thought to jump aside at the last moment and open it upon her with a bang. Whether or not this course would have succeeded will never be known; for the shot had taken effect, and about thirty yards from us she fell dead.

When we were in England, Winston's attitude towards any chance display of sang-froid on my part, for instance in the hazards of London traffic, had been expressed in a proverb he had learnt from his nurse: 'Where there's no sense, there's no feeling'; but now, softened by the exotic peril to which I had been exposed, and by what he was kind enough to call

the intrepidity with which I had faced it, he conceded the principle of my going armed in future; but there was a further difficulty; all the rifles were appropriated, and I was still defenceless till someone fished out a derelict weapon of a peculiar shape, so prehistoric that it had no generic name but only a Christian one, not a Martini or a Mauser but just 'Michael'—after a would-be settler who had left it behind in an accelerated exodus to Australia. But even Michael couldn't make a Nimrod of me. I did indeed let off at the same rhinos as Winston, but without an autopsy I could never prove that I had hit them. I had no chance of a lion, as the only one we saw broke with the tradition by which lions 'always keep in touch with the enemy', and bounded away over the infinite plain the moment he emerged from the undergrowth of the nullah through which we had pursued him for a whole morning with tom-toms improvised from biscuit-tins; and my sole indubitable kill was a hartebeest. So whenever in later days I have been asked if I shot, my answer has been 'Only Rhinoceroses'.

## II

## LOST IN THE MAQUIS

In August 1928 my niece Nancy Maurice took me to Corsica. I spent a few days on the way with the Spears' at Beaulieu, and although it was only the third year since people had discovered that the French Riviera was habitable in the summer, I found it already spoilt. I had no sooner arrived than I was hauled off to dine with some unknown and very rich Americans at the St. Juan-les-Pins Casino, where I was put between two perfect strangers, with a saxophone in the drum of my ear. The dinner was good, but there were twenty minutes for dancing between each course; and as I am a believer in doing one thing at a time,

I had a glum evening. Three days of seeing such life as this were enough to make me look forward to the wilds: little knowing what they had in pickle for me.

Nancy, who is a natural courier, was waiting for me at Ajaccio with a perfectly-formed plan for our tour. Corsica is not an enormous island, but it is on a noble scale, and I have never seen mountains that *looked* grander. We began with three heavenly days' motoring, and halted at the seaside town of Piana, about half-way up the western coast. Next morning we walked northwards through the region of fantastic rose-red Bakst-like rocks called the Calanche to the lovely little turquoise-and-emerald bay of Porto, which Dick Wyndham had warned me, of all things in Corsica, not to miss. After a pottering forenoon which was a delicious change after three days of speed, we lunched at the fishermen's inn and started on the walk back to Piana. The way was now uphill, the heat sultry; and for two or three weary miles my legs grew heavier and heavier. At last I espied on the left a providential straight-ruled grass-carpeted cutting through the trees, obviously contrived to save pedestrians a loop of the zigzag road. We took it without hesitation—and after a hundred yards or so it ended abruptly in a steep dry stony water-course. This was too much. Nancy had gone ahead, and was already skipping up the rocks like a chamois; so we agreed that she should go on and I back, meeting when I had looped the loop. As I retraced my toilsome steps, the Devil showed me a second short-cut, at right angles to the first. I must have been already sickening, or I flatter myself I should never have been such a fool as to turn aside; but I did, and presently the new path also came to a bad and sudden end in a dense thicket. By this time I was desperate, and thinking that the road *could* not be more than a few yards away, I plunged into the bush. What had become of the road, I cannot to this day explain; but the fact was, there was now nothing between me and the coast but a tract of what I had learnt in Kenya to call 'Wait-a-bit thorn'. My

coat and trousers were torn off in shreds, and soon I had nothing on but my shirt, my shoes, and my socks, still complete with 'suspenders'. There is only one circumstance which I recall with any satisfaction. After a while I noticed that my puffings and blowings were taking on a plaintive note. 'Now you mustn't whimper,' I admonished myself; and went back to panting evenly instead of whining jerkily. Considering that nobody was there to see whether my upper lip was stiff or not, I still think this did credit to my manners. For four and a half hours by my watch, which I had kept in my hand, I battled and struggled; and then, just as the sun was setting, two fell diseases, whose names Uræmia and Nephritis I learnt afterwards, and memorized by the help of the Muse Urania and the Egyptian Queen Nefertiti, saw their chance, and laid me low: my back broke (this is one of their symptoms) and I fell to the ground in a brackish puddle.

The spiritual experiences of any person wittingly so nearly done-for ought to be instructive; but mine were surprisingly and perhaps shockingly meagre. I have never had the instinctive belief in a future life from which so many of the splendours and miseries of mankind have sprung, nor have I been able to see anything objectionable in extinction, of which by the nature of the case one would be unaware. My mind on these matters suffered no change, and the 'fear of something after death' didn't enter my head. The fear of what might happen to me *before* death was more actual; but after all something *might* turn up, and I needn't meet trouble half-way. I occupied myself with two burning questions: if I died, would my housekeeper Mrs. Elgy remember to send the latest revise of my La Fontaine translation to Heinemanns? If I survived, would Ivor Novello be able to arrange for me to attend the first night of his play *The Truth Game* as a stretcher-case? In upon these mild and mundane speculations burst on a sudden the unexpected boggy of

Solipsism, which is the technical name for 'Tweedledee's theory that the Universe and all its contents are only 'things in the Red King's dream'. There could of course be only one Red King, but everybody is equally entitled to suppose that he is the one. Bertrand Russell had expounded the system to me at Cambridge, and we had agreed that it was incapable of disproof. It was quite possible that mine was the only consciousness in existence, and everything else a figment of my own imagination. A proud position; but if so, what was to prevent me from continuing through all eternity to imagine that I was lying with a broken back in a Corsican puddle? At all costs I must convince myself that this could not be. Some argument there was which would scotch the hideous hypothesis; but it lurked at the end of a long chain of reasoning. Back and ever back my brain raced through point after point behind each of which in succession the refutation of the fallacy took cover: I might have been scribbling from right to left an endless series of noughts, and eternally failing to head them with the numeral which would give them significance. Uramia and Nefertitis had got their way with me; and mercifully they put me to sleep.

Meanwhile Nancy, of whom any likening to bricks or trumps would be quite unworthy (if I had ever said a word against the Modern Girl I would take it back in her honour with both hands) had waited on the road till I couldn't be coming, and then made her own way back to the hotel, where she organized a search-party. The Corsicans were intolerable. Their reading of the situation was that whether she was my wife or my mistress, it didn't matter which, we had undoubtedly had a ruction (*nous nous étions chamaillés*), and either I had hidden to get rid of her, or she had knocked me on the head and concealed my body. Whichever it was, she deserved neither sympathy nor credence. If she said I had disappeared near the third milestone, they would begin their search at the second or the fourth, but by no means at

the third; and anyhow they were owls.\* Giving them up as a bad job, she managed to rope in the French gendarmerie, who were a very different matter. Throughout the night they systematically combed the coast, sounding klaxons and firing-off their pistols to attract my attention; but I was too deeply sunken in unconsciousness to hear them.

About eleven o'clock next morning they knocked-off for rest and refreshment, and two or three of them, with no other purpose than a bathe, took a boat and rowed round to a little cove. Just then I returned to what was left of myself, and was opening my eyes and making sure that my back was still broken, when I heard human sounds, and shouted. They hurried up, and in their strong arms gently carried me to the shore, where they gave me hard drinks and clothed me in a fisherman's butcher-blue trousers and green coat: then rowed me to Porto, where Nancy was ready with a motor to take me back to Piana. There I was put into bed, and slept twice round the clock. My rescue had involved a combination of two miracles: the cove had to be within earshot of my puddle, and I had to be conscious at the right moment. It is a high trial of my Rationalism to reject (as I do) the notion that the Powers above must have attached some special importance to my survival.

My anxieties were now over, but poor Nancy's had only begun. Why I cannot imagine, for I felt perfectly *compos*, the doctors told her that I should almost certainly lose my reason, and very probably finish up with general paralysis of the insane. However, she showed no dismay at the prospect of finding herself alone in Corsica with a mad uncle on her hands, and nursed me so well that after some days we could move to the greater accommodations of Ajaccio. My convalescence there, in a little hotel bedroom seethed by the blazing sun, was excessively tedious, and the only

\* The story has taken rank as a local legend. A friend who went to Corsica last year was driven through the scene by our identical chauffeur, Dominique by name, who stopped the car to relate it, and rendered with dramatic effect Nancy's cry of Eddal Eddal

amusing thing I remember from it is the plan I formed for my future. I was fed entirely on the most disgusting slops I ever came across, a thin broth made from some revolting island vegetable, which I was naturally unable to 'keep down'; and my palate, my whole being, yearned for better things. It so happened that all the three books I had brought with me for the journey, Boswell, *David Copperfield*, and *The Claverings*, contained the most mouth-watering descriptions of food: the fine veal to which Wilkes helped Dr. Johnson at their famous meeting at the Dillys' ('Allow me to recommend a squeeze of this orange—or the lemon, perhaps, may have more zest'), the neck of mutton which Mr. Micawber devilled in David's chambers; and most enticing of all, the two perfect lamb-cutlets and the asparagus-tips which Trollope sends up to Sir Hugh Clavering in two silver entrée-dishes on a tray. How I agonized with Sir Hugh, when the importunate Madame Gordeloup kept him in the next room while the cutlets chilled! And these reminded me of the schoolboy whom Lord Holland invited to choose his luncheon. The little fellow took his time, and asked for 'a duck and green peas, and an apricot tart with cream.' 'My boy,' said Lord Holland, 'if all the decisions of your future life are reached with as much wisdom as this one, you will be a great and good man.' If I recovered, I resolved, never another penny would I spend on pictures or theatres or books: I would live for food alone. My greatest friend should be the chef at Brooks's, whom I would inflame to revive the high tradition of English cooking. On Mondays Wednesdays and Fridays I would dine on his masterpieces. Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays I would consecrate to Boulestin's, with Mrs. Belloc Lowndes for company as often as I could persuade her. 'Inutile madame, je prends tout,' said an unworthy Frenchman to his hostess when she offered him the bill of fare. Not so I. 'Voilà un homme qui sait manger,' was what M. Boulestin should say of me, as the maître d'hôtel of the Tour d'Argent had said it of Joseph

Chamberlain. When I was back in London, I was disappointed to find these delicate visions had fled.

After what seemed endless weeks, we flew to Antibes, and I was home again in time and sufficient health to attend the first night of *The Truth Game* as a biped, and even to celebrate it afterwards at the Ambassadors' Club.

My convalescence was enlivened by my one and only contact with the Poison Pen. I received two or three anonymous letters of abuse, and one total stranger, who gave his name and an address in Hammersmith, told me that after reading the accounts of my adventure he had come to the conclusion that I was an effeminate fop with an undue liking for publicity. I thought this most unjust.

Christopher Hassall, in after years, took a more lenient view, and made me for ever thankful for my misadventure by writing a poem about it, published with his *Devil's Dyke* in 1936, which will be my best memorial.



## CHAPTER XIII

RUPERT BROOKE

His Position as a Poet—Beginnings of Our Friendship—LETTERS—*The Poetry Review*—The Queen of Sheba—‘Disgraceful’—Voyage to America—Mr. Klaw—Sir J. G. Frazer—Park Lane Party—Chaliapine—New York—Flecker’s Poems—Edith Wharton—D. H. Lawrence—*New Numbers*—W. B. Yeats—Niagara—Professor Schick—Lascelles Abercrombie—Calgary—Ligaments and Ligatures—Marnetti—Tahiti—W. H. Davies—*Hassan*—James Thomson—*Midsummer Night’s Dream*—Abercrombie’s Visit—Rupert’s Return—The War—Flecker’s Death—The pentagram—April 23rd, 1915—Literary Executor

MY friendship with Rupert Brooke was certainly one of the most memorable things in my life. In his combination of gifts, of body, character, mind and spirit, he was nearer completeness and perfection than anyone I have known; intellect and goodness, humour and sympathy, beauty of person and kindness of heart, distinction of taste and ‘the common touch’, ambition and modesty, he had them all; and there is no telling what he might have done if he had lived. But I said my say about him in the Memoir which was printed with his *Collected Poems*, and I will not hash it up again, but make my indispensable chapter, with the kind permission of Mrs. Brooke’s executors, out of unpublished fragments of our correspondence. (It must be borne in mind that many of his best letters are in the Memoir.)

First, however, I should like to say a word about his position as a poet. His complete work has now been before



RUPERT BROOKE

*From a photograph by Sherril Schell  
By permission of Messrs. Sidgwick & Jackson*



the world for twenty years, and I make bold to say that in the eyes of those critics and readers who care for poetry in itself, its place is sure. It has in my belief survived the attacks both of those whom it is doubtless disrespectful in me to call the fools of fashion, and of those others, more sincere, who admit no poetry that is not written from a point of view they can approve or share. Rupert wrote his war-poems at the very outset of the War, before the ideas of chivalry and generosity which throughout the centuries had attached to the Fighting Man were overlaid by the horrors of 'scientific warfare', and when it was still possible and natural and human to write in the spirit of Crispin Crispian as poets had done from Tyrtæus to Tennyson. Since he was doomed to die before the Armistice, I could find it in my heart to be glad that his end came early, and that he was spared the disillusionment and the agony which were the inspiration of a Siegfried Sassoon or a Wilfred Owen; but if he had lived to suffer as they did, I have no doubt that like them he would have risen to the height of the opportunity. A Pacifist who lets his Pacifism blind him to the poetry in Brooke's *The Soldier* or Julian Grenfell's *Into Battle* is surely as narrow as the Temperance Reformer who might ban the *Ode to the Nightingale* because it recommends the blushful Hippocrene.

I first set eyes on Rupert when he was nineteen, in the autumn term of 1906, his first at Cambridge, playing the tiny part of the Herald in the *Eumenides* with 'grace invincible.' I can't remember our first meeting, but he was in the set which filled the place that mine had held when I was 'up', and as in those days I went to Cambridge pretty often, I saw him from time to time. By 1909 I had reached the point of spending the inside of a week with him at a house his parents had taken for the summer holidays at Clevedon on the Bristol Channel; but our deeper friendship was yet to come. I had always known that he was by way of writing verse, but I never asked to be shown it, because

I liked him so much that I should have hated not to like his work; so the first I saw of it was *Day That I Have Loved*, which came out in the *Westminster Gazette*, and completely reassured me. When his *Poems* were published in December 1911, I sent him a letter which pleased him by what he called the 'understanding' that it showed; and a notice that I wrote in the *Poetry Review* (printed as an appendix to this chapter) brought us together once for all. I sent Rupert the draft of it with the letter which follows:

'Portsmouth.

'Sunday, Feb. 4, 1912.

'MY DEAR RUPERT,—

'I wonder what you will think of this. Did you ever hear of the *Poetry Review*? . . . I am afraid it is rather an absurd publication: in the number I have seen there was an article beginning "Let it be conceded at once, without cavil, that Mr. Ezra Pound's trumpet sounds the authentic note"—but it is beautifully printed, and I am told it has a circulation of 4000 copies! Francis Meynell told me the other day that the editor, Harold Monroe, had a great opinion of your book, and wanted to do you well; but as it is his daily business to compose panegyrics, he was afraid that if he wrote about you himself the readers would only think it was the usual sort of thing, and pay no attention (I must say this is a very decent attitude). The long and the short was that the pages of the *Review* were open to me! I was rather frightened, never having written a line of any sort since I left Cambridge—but anyhow I think I can do better than say that Mr. Brooke's trumpet sounds the authentic note—and I *might* be able to give you a leg-up—so I consented. I hope it may induce some of the 4000 to purchase . . .

'I showed the book on Friday to Edmund Gosse and Austin Dobson, and I was really delighted with their

reception of it. E. G. read a lot of it out loud, with every grace of diction—and after about three poems said: “I declare *contra mundum* that he is a poet,” and that you were far the most interesting of the new people I had introduced to him (others were James Stephens and Frances Cornford, both of whom he had liked very much). Austin Dobson, though less demonstrative and more diffident of his critical powers, seemed almost as much pleased. They asked me to convey to you the admiration of two elderly poetasters. (By the way, Rupert dear, if you meet Gosse I beg you for my sake to be nice to him—also he is a good backer and may be useful to you! and a little kindness does wonders with him). I steered them clear of the ugly poems, but found to my surprise that they took great exception to *Dead Men’s Love*, which I thought was quite safe. They took it as an outpouring of youth’s contempt on the love-affairs of persons past a certain age—and seemed to think you cast aspersions on their own powers! I hadn’t taken the poem in that sense at all, and thought that when you said the scene was in Hell you had meant it—and had imagined a kind of Hell in which the tragedy was to think one was alive and found one wasn’t. Which is right? they wouldn’t hear of my interpretation, so I said I would ask you. Please answer as to this . . .’

Rupert got this letter at Munich when he was on the verge of a breakdown, and sent me an answer from Rugby dated ‘end of February’. It is all so long ago that I have no false modesty about printing it:

‘ . . . Your letter and review gave me immense and slightly pink-cheeked pleasure. It is absurdly kind of you to face the terrors and pangs of parturition (at, you report, an advanced age for a first confinement) for me. Either innate and long-hidden genius or else the

continual and earnest study of the masters of English (me and Trollope and Crashaw and the rest) has given you, though, a finished and practised wit and clarity of style that'll fairly prick the honest stammerers who neighbour you in the *Poetry Review* (for, oh yes! I know it: I've taken it in since January, as it happens; so that alas! your review will only sell 3,999 fresh copies of my book). I love your account of Beauty running behind the cab of modern poetical points of view\*—Mr. Galsworthy or another crying "Whip behind", I suppose? . . .

'I liked the review very much from my own point of view, and, of course, felt passionately in agreement with it! But one feels so distorted and uncertain and oblivious about one's own work, that I'd rather, in any case, offer only thanks and not comment. I've an insistent queer feeling of having got rid of poems I've written and published—of having cut the umbilical cord—that they're now just slightly more anybody's concern than mine, and that everybody else has an equal right and a faintly greater opportunity of understanding them . . .

'I'm very glad Gosse and Austin Dobson liked the book. Was it perhaps your skilful advocacy? I've always had a sort of respect for Gosse, in spite of an almost irresistible tendency to despise and hate anyone who was writing about English Literature before 1890. He seems to keep an unusual combination of sanity and vitality in his taste, or outlook. Does he think my Muse one of those "decaying Macnads in a throng" who "shout a startling and indecent song", that I seem to remember he recently wrote about? . . .

'Oh, yes, about *Dead Men's Love*. You're entirely right, as to the meaning of it; in all ordinary meanings of the word meaning. I suppose it was just an idea—that they only found out they were dead by discovering This passage, whatever it may have been, was left out of the review.

the absence of bodies in that way, and that Hell just consists of such absence of bodies. But if anyone realizing that the point of Hell is that you have precisely similar desires in the absence of the means of satisfying them, can't help thinking of cis-Stygian embodiments of the horror—let him! I say. For a poem is essentially, I take it, tended by millions of strange shadows, just as poor Mr. W. H. was; and I'll not deny this was one of the shadows. But it was only a shadow: not in any way the substance. So I hope your elderly friends 'll be assured that I've not the smallest doubt they'll still for a long time be able to say with Ovid *Decepta est opera nulla puella mea.*'

I answered, how glad I was he had liked my review, and that 'I hoped the Virgin Mary was half as nice to Mrs. Zachariah about the birth of John the Baptist.'

On Christmas Eve 1912 he wrote to me from Rugby about a Russian toy that he had stolen from my rooms. It was a group of little figures on what I believe are called 'concertina-sticks', which you could shoot out to a great length by compressing a scissors-handle at one end—very fascinating:

'DEAR EDDIE,—

'I entered and cleared out of the flat yesterday, leaving the key on the hall table, small pieces of paper on the floor, and my heart all over the place. . . . A thing dawned slowly on me during Saturday. I attended breakfast that day in a state of slumbrousness and exhaustion. You and Seabrooke and the eggs were phantoms on the horizon of my muddled consciousness. At one point you seemed to take something out of a box and say "Buz buz buz this buz buz buz Christmas present buz buz" . . . I remember vaguely thinking you had said that Russian toys were your this-year's



Christmas presents . . . and vaguely saying " . . . oh! . . ." What else could a young man say, with his eyes full of sleep and his heart full of X——? As the morning wore on it came to me that *possibly*—and later *probably*—you had said it was your present *to me*. For it sat on the sideboard in an expectant way, and was very attractive. If that's not so, the situation is awkward, for I have the thing, very firmly. If it is so (and you couldn't have the heart to deny it now!) I'm sorry I seemed so very ungracious. It was my stupor. I am sorry.

'Ever

'RUPERT.

'I carried the toy about in buses, shooting it round the necks of acquaintances. A foreigner who shaved me was intensely interested in it, and said "It is very beautiful," rather solemnly.'

I answered on the 27th from Knebworth:

'DEAR RUPERT,—I now see exactly what the Queen of Sheba must have written as a Collins:

'DEAR SOLOMON,—

'I was terribly absent-minded at dinner last night and I am afraid you must have thought me very rude as you *must* have noticed that I wasn't listening to your delightful flow of proverbs—the fact is, I was so miserable at leaving Jerusalem that I could think of nothing else. However, it came back to me afterwards that you must have told me to take away anything in the Palace that I specially liked, so I told my maid to pack the hangings of the cedar house. I hope this is all right.

'Yours ever,

'B. SHEBA.'

'I had left the toy behind very reluctantly, for fear of being shamed into giving it to a child here—how vain is human precaution! . . .'

E.M. to R.B., March 27th, 1913:

' . . . I don't know if you read about the rag in the House yesterday. Charlie Masterman said the tactics would discredit even a discredited Opposition. There was an awful row, and the Opposition began making out that he had said "disgraceful" and the Chairman, who had been defending "discreditable" as a Parliamentary expression, said for the sake of a quiet life that of course if he had said "disgraceful" it would have been a very different matter. So for the next half-hour everyone on both sides amused themselves by bringing "disgraceful" into every sentence, and got suspended. It was too ridiculous. I met Violet Asquith in the passage, and said wasn't it fun "disgraceful" being elevated to the rank of a swear-word like "bloody". "Yes," she said, "I expect Masfield will put it in every verse of his next poem." '

In May 1913 Rupert started on his *Wanderjahr*, writing me on the 19th a letter of valediction:

' . . . I find it very hard to cut one's life abruptly, at a certain point —|. I shall be back by January, I think. Perhaps America's nearer than I think, though. I commend into your keeping all England, especially

Wilfrid\*

Cathleen†

The Nine Muses

and the Spirit of Wisdom and Goodness—

\* Gibson.

† Nesbitt.

some others, but I forget for the moment. I have already roughly planned out my *Tristia* . . . ?

On the 26th he wrote from s.s. *Cedric*:

'Behold me fairly launched on the Great World. Your letter was very nice. You're having a more romantic and pleasanter voyage than I [a Mediterranean trip in the *Enchantress*]. It does sound too lovely. I have my little romances though—a school of porpoises, and a whale spouting. And one of my fellow passengers is [a poet of the day]. Oh Eddie, he is a nasty man. He mouches about with grizzled hair and a blcary eye: and Mrs. — follows him with a rug. He eyes me suspiciously—he scents a rival, I think. We've not spoken yet. His shoulders are bent. His mouth is ugly and small and mean. His eyes are glazed. His manner is furtive. Is it to that we come? I feel like the Knights in Orcagna's picture (isn't it?) who ride out, and come on a hideous corpse, and hold their noses as they gallop past. I think I will drown myself at thirty: or turn schoolmaster speedily. . . . I have started a ballade in imitation of Villon: but it may not be printed.

'I found sitting next me at table a little man of fifty with a cold light-blue eye, with a pleasant turn of American humour. He appeared to be interested in theatres, so I took him into the smoking-room and delivered a lecture on Modern Drama in England, America and Germany, on Theatre-managing, on Commercialism in the Drama, and many other such topics. I got on to *The Great Adventure*: which he thought the best entertainment in London. I patted him on the head. "Yep," he said, "I've just sent a marconi-gram to buy that play for America." I said: "Oh, have you a theatre in America?" He said: "In New York I own the Grand Opera House, the Metropolitan Theatre, the

Knickerbocker Theatre, the Gaiety, and seven more. I have some in every big town in the States. I'm coming back with a new Lehar, a Bernstein, two German comedies . . ." I forget the rest. He turned out to be Klaw, of Klaw and Erlanger. I felt a little like Dominick [Spring-Rice], when he saw a lonely girl at a fancy-dress dance the other day, and took her out to dance, and it was Karsavina.

'Otherwise there's not much to chronicle; except the Canadian girl who takes me into a corner to sing the Canadian National Anthem:

'Splash me! oh splash me!

Splash me with the Ocean BLUE!

Mash me! oh mash me!

And I promise you that I'll mash YOU!

I feel nervous about my visit to Canada.'

E.M. to R.B., June 29th, 1913.

' . . . Donald Tovey told me a very funny story about Sir J. G. Frazer. It appears that F. is great at mechanical devices, among others a sliding door by which he can make his one drawing-room into two. When not wanted, the door is made to fly up into the storey above, where it makes one bedroom into two. Once there was some celebration at Cambridge, and an influx of distinguished foreigners who were quartered on the Dons. Frazer sent-up the door, put two married couples into the two bedrooms, and slept in the drawing-room himself. In the middle of the night he felt cold and cheerless in the vast room, got out of bed, and pushed the knob which brought the door down—never realizing the consequences till he sent up in the morning to ask why neither of the married couples had appeared at breakfast . . .

'Poor Philip Sassoon gave a well-meant entertainment

which was not so successful as it deserved. I arrived late, and after being kept a few minutes on the landing was admitted into a place like the Black Hole of Calcutta. The door was shut behind me, the light which it had admitted having shown for a second the flashing of stars and tiaras, revealing the fact that all the Ambassadors and Duchesses in London were present—but all that could be seen afterwards was a beautiful little Norman Wilkinson scene, representing a heavy iron nail-studded door which flapped in the draught, and Lillah MacCarthy beating against it and moaning inaudibly. Poor Mr. Balfour said: "I'm deaf myself, but I'm sure that even people who *can* hear can't hear this." The play was Maeterlinck's *Death of Tintagilles*—if you know it, you'll realize that it isn't the sort of thing to hold a fashionable London audience after a superb dinner. There was the most fearful fidgeting, and bumping-together of Guardsmen at the back of the room struggling for a little air to breathe. I stood next Sibyl Sassoon, who was in despair, and kept whispering: "You can't imagine the anguish I'm suffering," and "Never again will I ask a soul inside the house."

'I took Kennard Bliss to the Russian Opera, *Boris Godunov*, which is splendid. The *most* glorious Russian man called Chaliapine does Boris—gorgeously tall and handsome, marvellous singer and supreme actor. I'm told he drinks like a fish, and when his friends say Please don't, you'll spoil your beautiful voice, he says Hooray, then I shall be able to act instead of singing.'

On the same day he was writing to me, in the *Montreal Express*:

' . . . I write on my back, in a sleeping-car. I'm in an infernally bad temper, because when I got into this bleeding train, I found there wasn't a restaurant car

on it. 7.45 it started, and gets in at 8 to-morrow morning, and I've had nothing since lunch, and little then. Now I'm shut up in my upper half of the sleeping berth, I'm empty but a little easier. Beneath me sleeps—oh, a mattress and a plank between us!—a fat old lady. Every other berth in the car is shared by married people, so it is—naturally—the prevalent opinion that the fat woman is my wife. It causes her even more embarrassment than me. I'm clad in my new *batik* pyjamas, which are a dream. So I have some consolation in life.

'Ruminating on my "impressions" of New York and Boston for letters to the Westminster has made them so stale that I can't bear to put them down for you. They aren't very amusing. When I'm alone I sink into a kind of mental stupor, which may last for months. I shan't be bright again till I get back to you all . . .

'I spent to-day in the country outside New York, flirting with Louise. It's the first time I ever flirted with anybody called Louise, so I'm rather tired. I've been diving into many sides of New York lately. The low foreign part is rather fascinating. Bohemia in New York is rather cheap—even worse than in London. Theatres not very good: *revues* the best thing they do . . . It's very queer how utterly they depend upon us for literature. Masfield, Galsworthy, etc., are *precisely* what they are in England. The magazines are filled with English writers, and all the critical articles are about English stuff. They simply don't exist. The Laureateship is discussed ardently and continually\* . . . I say,

\* He had said in an earlier letter: 'The chief topic which excites America is, who (if anybody) is to be Poet Laureate. All the papers have immense articles, with pictures of Masfield and Noyes. They mention everybody as possible, except me and Wilfrid. Even Will Davies. I'm going down to the Stock Exchange to-morrow, where I hear they're betting on it.'

At the same time I was writing to him: 'I believe the P.M. will offer<sup>the</sup> the Laureateship to Bridges. Maurice Baring said what fun it would be if it were offered to Gossé, and what a struggle he would have between the duty of accepting and the duty of refusing.'

do just see that the Laureateship is kept. It would be a frightful scandal if it were abolished. Why not Bridges? I hope Violet [Asquith]’ll see that it’s all right. Kipling would be fine, too.

‘By the way, I had a card from Violet before I started, depicting the place where Ulysses met Nausicaa. What a thing to send to a person going to America! I shall retaliate with a postcard of Tammany Hall, or Teddy looking at the Statue of Liberty,—or whatever stands for Romance in this land. We don’t go back very far here, but we enjoy what we have. . . .’\*

‘I’m glad Stephens is getting the Academy prize, the *Crock of Gold* deserves it—Stephens, Masfield, de la Mare, all G.P.s [*i.e.* Georgian Poets]! Aren’t you proud of us?’

‘Everybody, even Mrs. Brooke, is asleep, so I shall stop this scrawl.’

E.M. to R.B. July 13th 1913, from Hill Hall, Epping.

‘. . . I got your delightful letter from the train to Montreal this week. It’s my duty as a friend to warn you that mischief is brewing [Here I pasted-on a newspaper cutting].

‘“BROOKE. On the 9th July, at —, the wife of R. C. Brooke, of a daughter.”’

‘Evidently the Fat Lady seen in a Train has nipped over to England and is foisting her bastard on you—so beware.

‘The great event of the week is Flecker’s book, *The Golden Journey to Samarcand*, I do think he has been and gone and done it! he has set out to make beauty, and has made it—a rare achievement, usually it only comes on the way to other things. I read the book, in floods of tears, on the way to the Admiralty . . . Wilfrid

\* Rupert had here committed an ‘Aubrey’ (see p. 187). I have run together similar passages from two letters.

[Gibson] has read it and thinks it beautiful, but doesn't like it for that reason. He first said the beauty was merely "an ornament," but I drove him from that position by proving that in each case the beauty *was the poem*, not something stuck-on—he then said he preferred people to find beauty where it wasn't, rather than where it was—on which I remarked with asperity that I supposed he would like the Ode to the Nightingale better if it were the Ode to the Crow—to which nice knock-down argument he found no answer, though I fear he wasn't convinced.

' . . . The party here is a mixture of Society and Bohemians, and includes Edith Wharton, whom I like very much . . . I must end with a good story of hers. An American lady, who lived in a flat at the top of a sky-scraper, engaged a servant at a registry—a Scandinavian girl, just arrived in New York with excellent characters from Norwegian situations. The first day she said "I'm having a little dinner to-night, and shall expect you to cook it." Answer, "No cook." "Then you must get the rooms tidy." "No sweep." "Then you must help me to dress, and do my hair." "No do hair." "Then what *do* you do?" Answer, "MILK ELK."

'And

Have you heard about poor Lady Condovery,  
Whose husband has ceased to be fond of her?  
He couldn't forget  
That he'd wed a brunette,  
But peroxide has now made a blonde of her.'

E.M. to R.B. July 20, 1913, from Kingsgate.

'My dear Rupert,—Patrick [Shaw-Stewart] always laughs at me for finding a Poet wherever I go (especially Davies at Knole!) and this time it has really been a miracle. Hearing that D. H. Lawrence was in England,



I sent him his Georgian cheque care of E. Garnett, who I knew was a friend of his, and got an answer from Kingsgate, Broadstairs, saying that he didn't suppose I was ever in this part of the world—whereas lo and behold I had long been engaged to come here to Beb and Cynthia Asquith for this Sunday. So I went to see the Lawrences and brought them to tea, where they were a tremendous success. He looks terribly ill, which I am afraid he is—his wife is a very jolly buxom healthy-looking German, they seem very happy together. She rather hurt my feelings by saying that she simply couldn't believe from my appearance that I cared for poetry!

'I've distributed and (I hope) sold a good many copies of Flecker. Gosse sent me a letter full of temperate and dignified praise, and next day his feelings got the better of him and he supplemented it with a post-card of incoherent enthusiasm.

'I'm very keen on the scheme for you and Lascelles and Wilfrid and Drinkwater to bring out a poetical serial. I hope you're coming into it. I've been trying hard to think of an alternative title to *The Gallows Garland*\* (which I fear will win the day by its absolute fitness and rightness) but without result, though by the way I thought of titles for other things—for instance, if Father Terry wants to make his Palestrina performances a real success at the Westminster Cathedral, it occurred to me that he should call them *Hullo Plainsong*.† I've asked Denis [Browne] to suggest it to him . . .

'I met Yeats at luncheon with Lady Hamilton yesterday, he is full of a marvellous automatic writer (she) about whom he's not allowed to publish anything, except that she writes for an enormous number of

\* Abercrombie and Gibson both lived at The Gallows, Ryton, Dymock. In the end the publication was called *New Numbers*.

† This alludes to the revue *Hullo Ragtime*, which had been Rupert's favourite entertainment in London.

obscure spirits who give dates and particulars of their lives which he afterwards verifies in old Timeses, etc. at the British Museum. He claims that she puts her fist through Religion and her toes through Philosophy—but it's difficult to judge on the slender evidence he is permitted to divulge . . .'

R.B. to E.M. King Edward Hotel, Toronto. July 22nd, 1913.

'OH EDDIE,—

'The truth is, you're on a higher level of civilization than I! I've got into the habit of roaming off and living away and never giving my friends any sign or news for months and months and then turning up and expecting to take up the old relationship just where it stopped. . . . But your letter-method is the nobler and wiser: and I, at least, derive infinite pleasure from it (and money too, I hope: if my plan of having your letters printed in a New York paper as revelations of high life, comes off). So I'm ashamed that I write so spasmodically. My way, I assure you. I write regularly to no one—not even my four young women. . . .

'[Clifton Hotel] Niagara, July 24.

'Were you ever here? It's very queer. The things are very low and broad and gloomy. I write with the sound of them monstrous in my ears: one is across the river opposite, one to the right. A dizzying affair. Funny I'm hearing the *same* noise as George Washington and Poe and Goldie Dickinson, only a little later on.'

I give my next extract for the sake of the coincidence revealed in Rupert's answer, which I subjoin, out of chronological order.

E.M. to R.B. Ockham Park, Aug. 3rd 1913.

' . . . There is also a German Professor called Schick, from Munich, who has the sweetest and most appreciative of natures, and is one of the most thundering bores I've ever met. He pours out ceaseless floods of information, mostly rather elementary. I've avoided talking to him myself, but whenever I've overheard him he has been either lecturing on Beowulf, or explaining that the name of Cologne is derived from Colonia Agrippina, or something like that. He was asked here to see the Byroniana. His naïveté is extraordinary, we played a game after dinner to prevent him talking—writing out lists of things beginning with the same letter—he was so delighted when any name he had heard of was read out: "Ach, Petrarch, verry good—ach, Peebles, a town in Scotland, ja, excellent—ach, Pericles, colossal!"'

R.B. to E.M. San Francisco, October 1.

' . . . I forgot to comment, didn't I? on your meeting old Schick. I was frightfully excited. He has been one of my most intimate friends for years. Dear dear, how it brings back the old Munich days. I was frequently in his drawing-room (my first German jest was one about Schick-saal), flirting with Wilhelmina, or whoever she was—his daughter (isn't the bitterest part of it that one forgets their names?) He is rather a silly old loon, but pleasant, in some dreadful way.'

E.M. to R.B. The Gallows, Ryton, Dymock, Aug. 17th 1913.

'Dear Rupert—Here I am at last, it's the most delicious little house, black and white, with a stone courtyard, crimson ramblers, and low-beamed rooms. . . . I've spent most of this morning with Mrs. Abercrombie, cutting-up French beans and peeling potatoes,

I love domestic occupations. There are two charming little boys, David aged 3 and Michael, who is very beautiful, about one. Michael is the charmer—he sits in a pen in the dining-room, made of wooden rails, with an abacus let into the side, and full of stuff animals. The bathroom is a shed out of doors, which you fill by means of an invention of Lascelles' (who was a scientist before he was a poet), a long tube of red indiarubber, with a funnel at the end, which you hang on a pump on the other side of a path—cold water alas! otherwise I have nothing but envy of Wilfrid coming to live here.

'I came down on Friday evening (having packed Winston off to Switzerland) and went yesterday for a longish walk with L. A.—it's lovely country, and we climbed a high hill from which we should have seen all the kingdoms of the earth, but for a thick haze. He's a great beer-drinker, and made me swill 'mild' at every pub, it's delicious and sustaining, but fuddling. Also he won't let one go to bed before one, so it's the strenuous life. He's writing some plays, but the only thing I've seen is the beginning of a long poem called *Zagreus*, which he insisted on reading out loud at the moment when I'd got up at midnight and said I really must go to bed. I didn't understand one word of it, so I can't tell you what it's about. I hope he isn't going to get permanently obscure . . .'

'Monday. Admiralty.

'Lascelles read out last night the beginnings of two plays (about half of each), the *End of the World*, and the *Staircase*, both magnificent, especially *End of the World*, in which a Dowser comes to a pub in a secluded valley, and explains that the comet which they see in the sky is rushing on the earth. You can imagine the splendid poetry and rhetoric he would pour out on such a theme . . . I'm so glad, as *Zagreus* had depressed me. . . .

'There is very little going on here—the discussion of the pox, arising out of the Medical Congress, is the chief thing. One or two papers called it syphilis, and some went so far as to write of venereal disease, but the *Daily Mail*, which was full of it, never got beyond "The Hidden Plague." I thought of writing them a letter about the small-hidden-plague and the chicken-hidden-plague . . .'

'R.B. to E.M. Calgary, August 16th.

'MY DEAR,—

'My progress is degenerating into a mere farce. The West insists on taking me seriously as a politician and thinker. Toronto, which is in the East, started in on me as a Poet, with an interview, which is only fairly funny, though it gets better when it's copied into *The Saskatoon Sentinel* and the rest, in fragments, as it does. Every little paper in Western Canada has started its Society Column with *Dust* some time in the last three weeks. Solemn thought.

'But in most of these towns they know me chiefly as a Political Expert. I average two reporters a day, who ask me my opinion on every subject under the sun. My views on the financial situation in Europe are good reading. And there are literally columns of them in the papers. I sit for an hour a day and laugh in my room. When I come back, though, I shall demand a knighthood from Winston. I've been delivering immense speeches in favour of his naval policy. What's really the matter with these Canadians is that at bottom they believe it's all play, and that war is impossible, and that there ain't no such place as the continent of Europe. They all live a thousand miles from the sea, and make an iniquitous living by gambling in real estate.

'But the papers here are applying a nice story to Lloyd George. I'm only afraid they got it from London. I'd

never even heard the story before, is it current "over there"?—A mouse (L. G.) pursued by two cats, taking refuge in the darkest corner of the cellar, gets drunk on whisky-drippings, and is seen staggering up the cellar steps saying "Where are those dam' catsh that chased me?"

'I have been lying in bed for half an hour practising to become American; the spittoon on the floor beside me. It's a lonely sort of game, and I'm not very good at it. I'm becoming the most expert of travellers, though. I've even started washing my own clothes. . . .

'England,—I dreamt, last night, that at Vancouver I got sick of the trip and came back to England, and landed at Grantchester (you should have seen how we drew up at the Boathouse), and wired to you that I was going to stay a night with you in London, and caught the 4.55, and, oh! woke. Would you have been there? I've a sort of idea you'll go to Venice or some lovely place in September. I envy you. You can't think how sick one's heart gets for something *old*. For weeks I have not seen or touched a town so old as myself. Horrible! Horrible! They gather round me and say, "In 1901 Calgary had 189 inhabitants, now it has 75,000," and so forth. I reply, "My village is also growing. At the time of Julius Cæsar it was a bare 300—Doomsday Book gives it 347, and it is now close on 390," which is ill-mannered of me.

'Oh, but I have adventures—had I anybody to tell them to! Friday I travelled with a Scotch whisky-manufacturer, a Radical. At Euston he had got into the carriage with a woman who had turned out to have nursed the late Duke of Sutherland up to the last. "And she gave me the most interesting particulars about the Duke's passing away." Isn't it extraordinary what things complete strangers will say to each other? . . .'

I had told him that having slipped on a step and torn some 'ligaments' I was in an armchair of sickness, 'attended' by Geoffrey Keynes (to whom I gave his first professional fee), with Wilfrid Gibson as the Angel in the Flat. He answered from Vancouver on September 8th:

'Isn't it extraordinary,—after the months that have been separating us—I got your letter of August 26th just now, from the bed of pain—Isn't "ligature"—or is it "ligament"—a lovely word?

"Is it prudent? is it Pure  
To go and break a ligature?"

"With lissom ligament  
My lovely one she went  
And trod the street  
On quiet feet"—

"Torn, like a ligament, his random mind"—

'Oh, it sets one singing—

' . . . I'm really writing because I'm so charmed by the picture of you in bed and Geoffrey binding you up and Wilfrid smoothing your brow and giving you chloroform, that I sat in the bloody lounge and laughed till Sir Gilbert Parker looked askance at me.'

R.B. to E.M. San Francisco, October 1.

'MY DEAR,—

'A postcard from you, via England and Vancouver, arrived yesterday. It displayed a divine place called Tarragona—far lovelier than these gaudy sky-scrapers. How perfectly imbecile I am, to wander over here, when Europe is infinitely more romantic! I began to realize it last week. I've gone soft through loneliness. I tossed

up—back to England? or on to the South Seas? The latter prevailed: so I leave for Honolulu on Tuesday. Then Fiji, Samoa, Tahiti, and a resting-place at the bottom of the Pacific, all among the gay fish and lovely submarine flowers. Will you all come, like the Titanic widows, and drop some wax flowers, a Bible, and a tear or two, on the spot where I'm reputed to have gone down? I hope so.

'You may continue to write to me. Letters will reach me occasionally, I suppose. And you may figure me in the centre of a Gauguin picture, nakedly riding a squat horse into white surf . . .'

E.M. to R.B. Dec. 14th 1913.

' . . . Did anyone give you an account of Marinetti's visit? I only attended one of his manifestations—a lecture at the Poetry Bookshop, in a kind of loft which looked as if it was meant to keep apples in, and one ought to get into it by a ladder through a trap-door. It was illuminated by a single night-light, which I thought at first must be a Futurist tenet; but it turned out to be only a fatuity of Monro's. Marinetti began his lecture by asking how he could possibly talk in a penumbra about Futurism, the chief characteristic of which was Light, Light, Light? He did very well all the same. He is beyond doubt an extraordinary man, full of force and fire, with a surprising gift of turgid lucidity, a full and roaring and foaming flood of indubitable half-truths.

'He gave us two of his "poems" on the Bulgarian War. The appeal to the sensations was great—to the emotions, nothing. As a piece of art, I thought it was about on the level of a very good farmyard-imitation—a supreme music-hall turn. I could not feel that it detracted in any respect from the position of *Paradise Lost* or the *Grecian Urn*. He has a marvellous sensorium, and a marvellous



gift for transmitting its reports—but what he writes is not literature, only an aide-mémoire for a mimic. . .

‘I have given Flecker’s play [*Hassan*] to Tree, and I’m really hoping that something may come of it. Basil Dean (ex-Liverpool Repertory, now stage-manager to Tree) thinks the world of it. and so does Alan Parsons. . .

‘I’ve been having a vehement correspondence with D. H. Lawrence about what I consider the formal deficiencies of his poems. He tells me I am the policeman of poetry—just as Sturge Moore compared me to a schoolmaster—but I am impenitent . . .’\*

On January 16th, 1914 he wrote me from Tahiti a letter which was memorable for giving me my first sight of two of his finest poems, the *Psychical Research* sonnet and *Heaven*.

‘MY DEAR,—

‘I’ve been shamefully lazy. I’ve half completed so many things. But nothing finished bar these poor fragments . . . I expected to find months and months of mail here. And lo! nothing. Whether the man in ‘Frisco has played me false, and decamped with all my money and your descriptions of London life and Mlle X. and Fräulein Y.’s love letters, or whether he is merely lazy, I don’t know. Something *may* come by the next post in two days. If not, I’m cut off from everything till I can tear myself from Tahiti—and that won’t be for a long time, unless my conscience awakes. It’s too fascinating, at first sight. And Gauguin *grossly* maligned these ladies.—Oh, I know all that about expressing their primitive souls by making their bodies squat and square. But it’s blasphemy. These goddesses—He’d have done Venus of Milo [here is a drawing of a squat and square Venus with a palm tree on the horizon]. Aren’t there steps one mustn’t take with the body?

\* For subsequent penitence, see p. 227.

'My homeward face is towards you. Farewell for a time. The moon is on the lagoon, and it's too warm, writing. I shall go and dream and float and woo nymphs.

'Paradisally  
'and with love  
'RUPERT.'

E.M. to R.B. Jan. 25th 1914.

' . . . I felt very dull and depressed my first 10 days in London [after an Italian journey with Jim Barnes], but I'm just beginning to be amused and interested again. I've just been to tea with W. H. Davies, who as I may have told you decided to leave Sevenoaks because of the uncertainty of his social position. He said he had parted on bad terms with his landlady. She said that he "rotted the blinds" by keeping his window open. He said he would buy her new blinds when he left, and went on opening the window. She then said that this rotted not only the blinds but the window-frames. Also a lady, for some reason, used to send a little boy to knock at the door as hard as he could, and the landlady wouldn't interfere—also the lady turned out to be a niece of Wordsworth's, which seemed to W.H.D. a strange irony, that the niece of one poet should send a little boy to knock at another poet's door. He is now in lodgings near Regent's Park, and he said he was leading a very simple life—"for instance, the milkman only calls once a day."

' . . . More worries, this time from Flecker. I'd been working quite hard for his play, and interested Basil Dean in it. B.D. really believes in the play, but thinks it wants a great deal of doing-to, compression, rearrangement etc.—*not* rewriting—and he offered to do all this work on it (with a very good prospect of getting it taken, either by Tree, or by a friend of his who is going to have

an autumn season) on condition of a percentage, say 25%, of the profits, and calling it "By J.E.F., prepared for the stage by B.D." Now I think the thing is to get the play produced, in good conditions—and this seems to me an excellent arrangement for F. I wrote to propose it to him, and he replied (Saturday) "accepting unreservedly." Today I got a letter saying he is suddenly feeling much stronger (!) and that I am to tell Dean he doesn't mean what he said at all and that he reserves his complete liberty of negotiation as if he had never written the first letter! I've written very strongly to him, pointing out the advantages of the plan, and also the extreme bad appearance of his writing one thing one day and another the next. I do hope he will be sensible, he is really a most difficult person to be agent for! Poor dear he had been ill ever since Christmas with fever every night. I'm glad he's better, but I wish it didn't have just that effect on the workings of his mind! By the way he sends his love to "Rupert Brooke, our Donne Redivivus." He also tells me that by dint of translating the 6th *Æneid* he has just discovered how to write really fine blank verse. . . .

'I must end up with the one good anecdote I've heard. A man I met in Italy [this was the Consul at Leghorn, Mr. Carmichael] told us he had once met James Thomson, author of *City of Dreadful Night*. He was quite speechless, and everyone very shy. My friend summoned up courage to ask "Whereabouts do you live in London, Mr. Thomson?" The answer was—in a cockney accent—" 'Ackney. Nice family. Bit o' meat most days. Bit o' pudding on Sundays." And that was the only thing he said.'

E.M. to R.B. Feb. 12th, 1914.

' . . . I had a charming Sunday with the Wilfrid [Gibson]s, who seem flawlessly happy. Their cottage is

very nice, all their things are pretty, beautifully arranged and kept, all with a perfect sense of style. W., Lascelles and I went for a lovely walk, it's beautiful country—by the way, I made rather a good quotation. We passed an odd-looking house, with a leggy colonnade and pink whitewash, comfortable and old-fashioned, but new. Lascelles said it had just been built by a Colonel, an Early-Victorian house born out of due time. My quotation was

Oh latest born and ugliest vision far  
Of all Victoria's faded squircarchy!

which you must admit was apt. . . .

'Have you seen notices of Barker's *Midsummer Night's Dream*? I went to the first night. It's lovely my dear. The fairies all gold from top to toe. (The only failure was their faces, which were gold too—and the gilt hadn't "taken" except on the noses, which gleamed in what looked like puddles of putty—but perhaps they've found out how to do it better by now.) The scenery very beautiful—the forest scene is simply a low green mound, rising gradually to the centre of the stage, and the background tall green steamers suggesting the trunks of trees. The grouping is so fine that I longed to be a painter, and immortalize every pose; and the acting is mostly excellent, making the story thrilling, and the clowns extraordinarily amusing. Of course most of the papers are stupid about it, the Mail called it a SHAKESPEARE NIGHTMARE; but I think it *must* succeed . . .'

E.M. to R.B. March 22nd, 1914.

' . . . I had a delightful visit last Saturday to Wednesday from Lascelles Abercrombie. I tried to show him as many aspects of London as could be got into the time, here is the programme, do you think it was good? Sat. Denis Browne and Clive Carey to tea, then

*Midsummer Night's Dream* with a visit to Lillah between the acts. Sunday, W. H. Davies and Michael [Sadleir] to breakfast—luncheon with the Dunsanys—a beauty-party at tea here, Cathleen [Ncsbitt], Diana [Manners], Katharine [Horner] and Ruby Peto, all looking their very best (Lascelles almost speechless with admiration, he didn't know there *were* such people!), dinner with Gosse and Henry James who was *magnificent*, with adjournment to Cathleen's rooms (to meet Sarah Allgood and Maire O'Neill, but they didn't turn up). Monday the Ihlee show at Carfax, which is very good, Ralph Hodgson and Basil Dean to luncheon, the Palace in the evening to see Nijinsky, but alas he was suddenly ill so we only had Wilkie Bard, then Café Royal with Mark Gertler and Jack Squire and a distant view of Epstein. Tuesday I was no good, as it was the Naval Estimates. I got L. into the House to hear Winston's speech which was rather dull and technical, and L. had to go before the end part, which was better, to read the *End of the World* at the Bookshop, and we only met at T. E. Hulme's after 11—and L. had to go next morning. I've made a good thing out of it all, as L. is rewarding me with the dedication of the *End of the World*, which will in itself assure me of immortality. My next "week-end visitor" is to be Cookham [nickname of Stanley Spencer, because he lived there].'

Rupert answered this from New York on May 24th:

' . . . I grew green with envy at your account of L. Abercrombie's Saturday to Wednesday. Even the best of the best people in Ryton—nay, Dymock itself—must have seemed to him a little tame after that. Raymond Buildings must be littered with dropped smocks. May I add a well-worn *paréo* to the heap on Friday week—a day or two after you get this? I've just cabled to you, to find out if you *will* be in London then. For the agony of

doubt conquered my deep and secret desire to wander in on you, all unexpected, one lovely June morning. I'm romantic at heart, but the practical lies deeper—so I've determined to secure the future if I may.'

Cathleen Nesbitt and Denis Browne and I met him at Paddington in the small hours of June 6th; and there followed great slayings of fatted calves, in the last two of the happy months. Then came the outbreak of War, and thereafter there is little to add to what I wrote in my Memoir; but here are a few more scraps of letters.

R.B. to E.M. Rugby, Sunday (Aug. 2nd) 1914.

'DEAR EDDIE,—

'I'm going (D.V.) on Tuesday to: c/o F. M. Cornford, Umtata, Cley, Norfolk, for at least a week. I give you my address, because you're the one link I have with the heart of things in this bloody time. Send me a card, once, to say how things are.

'Mrs. Elgy, in a flood of affection for me at my departure, put any little gifts she could find into my bag. Frances Cornford's *Poems*, and *Les Caves du Vatican*, are the only ones I've found. Maurice Baring on Russia I took myself. All shall return to you, in time.

'Also, I have your green trunk. I demanded the bag Shaw-Stewart took away once. Mrs. Elgy said "Ar. Mr. Marsh, 'e *thinks* Mr. Shaw-Stewart sent that bag back. But 'e 'asn't. But Mr. Marsh *thinks* 'e 'as." She spoke with gloom, as if it was a well-known monomania of yours. So she gave me your green trunk. I wonder if that is all right.

'Now the thing has really come, I feel as if I *can't* sit still. I feel I must go as a correspondent, if I can't as a fighter. Tell me if you hear of any job.

'Tomorrow, I'm twenty-seven!

'I feel as if I had left London for ages. I *did* enjoy

July. It's now a far and lovely vision. I thought Violet quite adorable on Thursday night. All these things are past. Do you have a Brussels-before-Waterloo feeling? that we'll all—or some—meet with other eyes in 1915? . . . ?

When Rupert and Denis Browne were at Blandford with the Hood Battalion of the R.N.D. they planned an evening at the Ambassadors Theatre, and I had proposed dining at our old haunt the Moulin d'Or. Rupert had loftier views, and he wrote to me on the last day of 1914:

' . . . For Monday evening. I'm so rich (thanks to the Admiralty paying me for my lost MSS.)\* that I think I'll give a dinner at (say) the Carlton Grillroom or Café Royal. I think the Moulin d'Or isn't good enough for a last dinner before the wilderness. I go on Tuesday afternoon.

'Desideration in regard to companions at the *Ambassadors* is divided into three parts.

'(1) People one *likes* to be with. I have secured to me the only two there are—at least, the only two available.  
'(2) Amusing People (very important after Camp). If you knew how rarely desirable a good joke becomes to one after the mud—like a good liqueur or a divine sweet. If for instance Maurice Baring were back from the front—

'You and Denis aren't excluded from your natural place under (2) by the fact that you come under (1) (in this so delightful world) as you *are* excluded from

'(3) WOMEN.

'There one hesitates. *Pro*, is the fact that one *aches*, after camp, for femininity: the sound of skirts, the twitter of the creatures, etc. Oh dear! *Against* it, the

\* A box had been lost on the Antwerp expedition. I don't think I ever heard what had been in it.





Yasmin  
+ fragrant

How splendid in the morning glows the lily: with what  
grace he throws  
His supplication to the rose: do roses nod the head, Yasmin?

But when the silver dove descends I find the little flower  
Whose very name that sweetly ends I say when I have  
said - Yasmin

The morning light is clear and cold: I dare not  
in that light behold  
A whiter light, a deeper gold, a glory too far  
shed, Yasmin.

But when the deep red eye of day is level with  
the lone highway,  
And some to Meccah turn to pray, and I toward  
thy bed, Yasmin.

or when the wind beneath the moon is drifting  
like a soul aswoon,  
And harp and planets talk love's tune with  
milkly whips outspread, Yasmin.

Shower down in thy love, O burning bright! For one  
night or the other night  
Will come the Gardener in white, and gathered  
flowers are dead, Yasmin

James Elroy Flecker

reflections that there *aren't* many amiable ones: and that, at the best, they're not very nice companions,—not fully possessed of a sense of humour.

'What about—if you don't go back to the ships—Supper afterwards? Is there still any place one can drink alcohol out of tea-cups?

'RUPERT.'

The Carlton Grill was decided upon, and the additions to the party were Arthur Asquith and his sister Violet, who came under both (1) and (2), and under (3) as the exception which proved the rule; and after the theatre we all went to the Edwin Montagus', where we drank our alcohol in a Christian manner.

Flecker had died at Davos the day before, though we didn't know it till the Tuesday. Rupert wrote to me from Camp on the 8th:

' . . . London's a lovely dream. It was fun that night, wasn't it?

'I spent, forwent, a lovely hour of the afternoon with Cathleen, penning [in Raymond Buildings] some absurd phrases about Flecker. I was grotesque and ornate: not having time to be simple. What a miserable task, writing a friend's obituary in the *Times*. At the same table as he wrote *Yasmin* in your book, the last time I saw him.

'I jotted notes, and the *Times* interwove their gems. "Educated at Balliol, (then me) *his Muse was stertorous with the lush slumbers of the East*. His father is the Rev. W. Flecker. *Apollo yielded to Marsyas, and fled crying strangely*." What a bloody jest: and a bloody world.'

I wrote to him on February 26th enclosing a charm in the form of a pentagram:

'This is from a beautiful lady who wants you to come back safe—her name is not to be divulged. I have promised that you shall wear it, and I beseech you to make my word good. It's a very potent charm, she says, and even if you don't believe, it's a sign of the sort of way people care for you, even if they don't know you very well . . .'

He sailed for Lemnos on the 28th, and answered from 'North of Tunis':

' . . . I wish I were younger: then the five-pointed jewel would have been the height of my wish. Even now it thrills a little. I wear it round my neck with my identification disc. Please thank Anonyma and say I'm quite sure it'll bring me luck. But what "luck" is, we'll all wait, and you'll see, perhaps. I can well see that life might be great fun, and I can well see that death might be an admirable solution. At that, quote to her something appropriate from the *Anthology*, and leave her to her prayers. But first give her a kiss of pure gratitude from me—hand or mouth at your discretion.'

The end came on April 23rd. I will not here repeat the story which is fully told in my Memoir; and I will only add, what I did not know when I wrote it, that Wordsworth also died on the 23rd, so it was his day as well as Shakespeare's and St. George's.

At this point it seems impossible to avoid going into a painful and delicate matter. If as I believe Rupert Brooke is destined to remain as a considerable figure in English Literature, the question is bound to be asked, why it was that I ceased to be his 'literary executor;' and the answer involves a discussion of my relations with his Mother. The drawback is, that I can only tell my own side of the story: she is not

here to tell hers. I am conscious of errors in tact and judgment on my part, and I am quite sure that she could have adduced many more of which I am unconscious; so the reader must bear in mind that I am not claiming to make any but an *ex parte* statement, and I can only assure him that I shall not be intentionally writing as a special pleader of my own case.

Mrs. Brooke, whose nickname was the Rance, was a remarkable woman, and in her strength of character worthy to be a great man's mother. When I first knew her, her face was already very old for her age, a network of little wrinkles; but a strong resemblance to her son could still be traced, in the general cast of her countenance and especially in the look of her eyes, her *regard*, which was very like his. She had a keen intelligence in practical things, and a certain grim humour in her own sense—not the kind of humour that makes people tolerant and self-critical; but of artistic perception I never saw the smallest sign. She was extremely autocratic and extremely puritanical, rigid and conventional in her notions of decorum, living most strictly up to her ideals of duty; and passionately devoted to Rupert, with whose mind and view of life she was yet completely out of sympathy. So long as he was under her roof and her control, he chafed at her authority, and with his intimates railed at her perhaps more than he should; but once he gained his independence his natural affection asserted itself, and he became a loving and considerate son. 'I've such a warmth for the Rance,' he wrote to me from New York in May 1914.

In his last letter, written from the *Grantully Castle* 'off Greece' on March 9th, 1915, he said (I only give the passages that bear on the matter in hand):

'This is very odd. But I suppose I must imagine my non-existence, and make a few arrangements.

'You are to be my literary executor. But I'd like mother to have my MSS till she dies—the actual paper and ink, I mean—then you.

A NUMBER OF PEOPLE

'You must decide everything about publication. Don't print much bad stuff.

'There's not much to say. You'll be able to help the Rancee with one or two arrangements.'

He had written in the same sense to his Mother, adding with what proved to be unfortunate vagueness that no doubt I would consult her; and she took this as giving her the decisive voice in any issue between us.

The news of his death came on a Friday, and the following Sunday week I spent with Mrs. Brooke at Rugby, also the Sunday fortnight after that. We had never taken to one another, but our shared loss brought us together: I was desperately sorry for her, and she seemed to depend on me; but I thought she was more broken than she was, and I realized later that in my desire to save her trouble, I had taken too much upon myself.

Before the end of the month I brought out the volume called *1914*, with no preface, and for biography only a table of seven dates; but I had already decided that it was a part of my duty to write a memoir for a collected edition of Rupert's poems, and after equipping myself with such material as I could get hold of I went towards the end of July to stay for a week, at a village called Greenway, with the Wilfrid Gibsons, who gave me a 'room of my own' in which I wrote all day. I had said nothing of my intention to Mrs. Brooke, and here I am open to judgement. I freely confess my motive. I had my own definite ideas of what was wanted, and I felt quite sure that hers would be very different, and less to the purpose: a collaboration between us was utterly impossible, and I thought I should be in a stronger position if I got something written down on my own lines, as a basis for discussion. It may be that I ought to have put her feelings first; but I still think I did right.

When I sent her my manuscript, the storm broke. I had

had no business to write without consulting her. Rupert was hers, not mine, and it was outrageous that a single one among his friends, especially one of comparatively recent standing, should take on himself to determine the manner in which he should be presented to the world. What she wished for was a conglomerate of obituaries, collected from schoolmasters and schoolfellows, dons and undergraduates, and so on—spokesmen for all the paths he had trodden. This was just what I had been afraid of—I had seen too many such biographies.

Apart from this, she disliked the tone I had taken, which she found light and unworthy. (It would not be fair to say that she wanted Rupert drawn as a prig, but that was what I felt at the time.) I had shown him laughing at things which she held sacred. For instance, I had copied out an early letter to St. John Lucas about a Headmasters' Conference which had been held at Rugby, poking a little mild school-boy fun at the proceedings; and she sent me back my draft chapter with 'applepie applepie applepie . . .' written all over the passage. 'You seem to forget,' she said, 'that Rupert was a schoolmaster's son, and that I am a schoolmaster's widow.'

I need not go into the developments which followed. She tried hard to get the book she wanted written, but it was impossible, if only because so many of the friends she might have drawn upon had been killed in the War; and she was as anxious as anyone that *some* memoir should appear. I had of course met her wishes in detail as far as I felt I could, and in the end she agreed to the publication of my attempt. It came out in April 1918, much improved by reason of the delay; and I was greatly touched by the generosity of the Introduction in which she gave it her guarded blessing. It was not, she implied, what she would have wished it to be; but she ended, 'I cannot speak strongly enough of the ability and loving care that Mr. Marsh has given to the work.'

After this we settled down, as I thought, to a period of

friendly though never intimate relations. I made a point of writing to her whenever there was any news about Rupert's books: more than once or twice she thanked me for the help I had been to her, and I remember her saying that she didn't know what she would have done without me. I was glad to think that 'true reconciliation had grown,' and that all was forgiven. But when she died and her will was read, it was found that she had appointed three executors, of whom I was not one. She was of course entirely within her legal rights, as Rupert's testament had been informal; but it came, I think, as a surprise to everybody—one of my involuntary supplanters took it so much for granted that I was to be an executor, that he read the document without noticing the absence of my name, and rang me up to ask about my plans for attending the funeral in that capacity. This was the first I heard of the will. She had only mentioned me to leave me *for my life* the manuscripts which Rupert had meant me to have, after her, without conditions (it is charitable to suppose, what is quite conceivable, that this part of his instructions had passed from her memory). On my death they were to go to King's College, Cambridge, to which, as she knew (or had known), I had always intended to leave them. I did not care to have them on these terms: they would have been merely a responsibility, and a perpetual reminder of an injury: so I gave them straight to King's, where they are now in the Library. The pleasure of the knowledge that Rupert wished me to have them is unimpaired, and sufficient.

## APPENDIX I TO CHAPTER XIII

(REPRINTED FROM *The Poetry Review* FOR APRIL, 1912)

POEMS. By Rupert Brooke. (Sidgwick and Jackson, 2s. 6d. net.)

It is almost disconcerting, in days of so much critical insistence on 'unity of impression,' to meet with a poet who flings himself with his full force and passion, and with a wild unscrupulous gaiety, into and out of each mood that offers. Mr. Brooke can write in every tone, reverent, gross, grim, cynical, or tender. Now he sees the fullness, now the hollowness of life. He is several kinds of philosopher, and an *enfant terrible*. Take his treatment of love. At one moment he boldly assumes a place among historic lovers. Next he finds that he is an *amant imaginaire*, lukewarm, fit only to be spewed out of the mouth of Love. Then he shudders at the time when his present passion will degrade itself into tolerance, or worse; and again, the comic spirit seizes him, and he sees before and behind him a series of absorbing trivial devotions, each indeed a flash, but in the pan. A too conscientious critic might argue that he is not sincere, that he rides round the world as though it were a circus, crashing through the emotions as if through paper hoops. This much is probable—that he writes more from his imagination than from his experience. That is to say that he is a young poet. 'Full soon his soul shall have her earthly freight . . .' Meanwhile let us be thankful for a man who can make so much beauty.

What are the influences that have moulded him? It is clear that he is a deep and passionate student of English poetry; and like the love described in his own *Mumma*, his art is distilled from many essences of the past. But there are few



echoes in his verse; one is inclined rather to say 'Marvell would have liked this, Crashaw this, and Suckling that; this would have pleased Browning, and that Rossetti.' Even Coleridge, I submit with due trepidation, would have found here and there the trace of a kindred spirit:

And the air lies still about the hill  
With the first fear of night. . . .

Would it be too surprising if that were found in a lost verse of the *Ancient Mariner*? A very different artist (and with this remark let a somewhat doubtful apologist dismiss an aspect of Mr. Brooke's achievement which many readers will find distasteful), the prose-poet of the Yahoos, and the poet-prosaist of the Lady's Dressing-room, would have found his account in the coarseness—less sardonic but more exuberant and rollicking than his—of certain poems.

The book is in three parts: '1908-1911'; 'Experiments'; and '1905-1908'; and it is a satisfaction to note the progress of poesy from the earlier section (which stands last in the book) to the later. There are exquisite things among the Juvenilia. *Day that I have loved*, in Dowsonian alexandrines, is suffused with a wistful twilight of beauty:

We found you pale and quiet, and strangely crowned with  
flowers,  
Lovely and secret as a child. You came with us,  
Came happily, hand in hand with the young dancing  
hours,  
High on the downs at dawn. . . .

*Pine-trees and the Sky* conveys the gentle healing and reconciliation worked in a harassed brain by a noble and tranquil aspect of nature. It is not like Wordsworth, but I think he would have cared for it:

Then from the sad west turning wearily  
I saw the pines against the white north sky,  
Very beautiful, and still, and bending over  
Their sharp black heads against a quiet sky,  
And there was peace in them.

(The metrical audacity of the third line, which might be inadmissible in a poem of more rigid form, is here justified. The first three syllables constitute, by poetic fiction, an anapæst, but the retardation, caused by what the ear must feel as an extra accent, gives an indefinable effect of the slow dropping-in of balm upon the lover's overwrought and wearied senses.)

The night piece *Seaside* has a lovely passage, resonant with the sibillance of its theme:

In the deep heart of me  
The sullen waters swell towards the moon,  
And all my tides set seaward.

The 'Experiments' are, as experiments should be, experimental and interesting. Two of them are in choriambics, the merit of which (and this is a compliment to the later and not an insult to the earlier pioneer) is that they are not Swinburnian; and the third in remarkably free alexandrines, without cæsura, and with accents on the 2nd, 6th, and 10th syllables. These three poems, by avowing their status as exercises, indispose the reader to consider their substantive merits.

The volume must stand or fall by the poems of 1908-1911. Each of these has a claim of its own. The range is wide; and whether his subject have most in it of mystery, of humour, of horror, or of pure beauty, the poet writes with a buoyant power, and in a rich and solid texture. There is an occasional looseness or roughness; there is one black rhyme:\* here and there a violence or a naughtiness; a protest must now and

\* This was 'star' and 'Ambarvalia'.

then be fondly entered on the old-fashioned score of taste. But cons in poetry weigh little against pros; and it will be surprising if the book does not come to be looked on as one of the stations of the fiery cross which the Muse now seems to be sending out through England. *Dust*, a poem of music, movement, and fire, with the 'bright ascending jubilant pomp' of its last five stanzas, is, perhaps, the piece to recommend for first reading. *The Jolly Company*, and the *Song*, with its gay and winning charm, should find an open door into anthologies.

Some of the poems are founded on that sudden sense of the unreality of phenomena which everyone feels at moments, and to which Mr. Brooke must be notably accessible. *Dining-room Tea* is the record of one such instant. The scene is an ordinary tea-party. Its homely details are vividly presented, almost as in the opening of some magic story by Mr. Wells. There is a click, and the room with its contents is on the other side of the abyss; the poet, lifted out of space and time, sees for an age, *sub specie eternitatis*, the *idée* of the teacups, the essential spirit of his companions, fixed in the noble immobility of everlasting things.

I saw the marble cup; the tea,  
Hung on the air, an amber stream;  
I saw the fire's unglittering gleam,  
The painted flame, the frozen smoke.  
No more the flooding lamplight broke  
On flying eyes and lips and hair;  
But lay, but slept unbroken there,  
On stiller flesh, and body breathless,  
And lips and laughter stayed and deathless,  
And words on which no silence grew. . . .

In the end the spell is broken, and the trivial movement of diurnity resumes at the point where it was interrupted by the eternal second. The rendering, in almost Dutch detail, of an experience so elusive, is surely an achievement. *Town and*

*Country* gives a more uncomfortable aspect of the same hiatus. Lovers are advised to keep their passion within four walls. Let us resist the romance of love on a sunlit hillside, lest

Unconscious and unpassionate and still  
 Cloudlike we lean and stare as bright leaves stare,  
 And gradually along the stranger hill  
 Our unvalled loves thin out on vacuous air,  
 And suddenly there's no meaning in our kiss. . . .

The last four stanzas, from which I have damagingly torn these lines, are magnificent.

It is, perhaps this sense of 'other-worldliness' which gives Mr. Brooke the detached attitude in which he contemplates and criticizes the '*Shape of the Human Body*.' In this fantastic poem he gives us, as Stevenson does in *Pulvis et Umbra*, but with amusement instead of panic, some notion of what might be thought of our form by some being not prepossessed for personal reasons in its favour. Oddly and irrationally made such a being might find us:

Straggling, irregular, perplexed, embossed,  
 Grotesquely twined, extravagantly lost  
 By crevice paths and strange protuberant ways  
 From sanity and from wholeness and from grace.

The effortless lift with which the poem rises from this quaintness to the serene and stellar loveliness of its close is one of the lost trophies of the seventeenth century which Mr. Brooke has recovered for the art of his day.

And if he can look at his own species from the outside, he can also enter, with a strangely imaginative sympathy, behind the very eyeballs of another race. *The Fish* is in some ways his most remarkable performance. In octosyllabic lines of sumptuous and weighted sonority, he puts into words the quintessential life of his subject, somewhat as Wagner put into music the deep wateriness of the great river:

A NUMBER OF PEOPLE

Those silent waters weave for him  
A fluctuant mutable world and dim,  
Where wavering masses bulge and gape  
Mysterious, and shape to shape  
Dies momentarily through whorl and hollow,  
And form and line and solid follow  
Solid and line and form to dream  
Fantastic down the eternal stream;  
An obscure world, a shifting world,  
Bulbous, or pulled to thin, or curled,  
Or serpentine. . . .

I am conscious that I have done Mr. Brooke much injustice by fragmentary quotation from poems whose merit is *to be wholes*; and I will end with a stanza from *Flight*, which even unsupported by its context can hardly fail of its haunting and mysterious effect:

For if my echoing footfall slept,  
    Soon a far whispering there'd be  
Of a little lonely wind that crept  
    From tree to tree, and distantly  
    Followed me, followed me. . . .

E. MARSH.

## APPENDIX II TO CHAPTER XIII

WHEN I was arranging Rupert Brooke's *Collected Poems* for publication, I was naturally very much exercised by the problem of selection. Apart from the volume he had brought out in his lifetime, which had of course to go in as it stood, everything was at my discretion. One point seemed clear: so long as his place was still to win, his literary baggage should be kept as light and choice as possible; later on, there might be no harm in adding a few pieces of less substance.

The item about which I felt most hesitation was a fragment of a novel called *Death of John Rump*, somewhat in the manner of Hilaire Belloc's *Emmanuel Burden*, with an Epilogue in verse—a work of his Cambridge days. Rightly or wrongly, I decided against it; but the Epilogue is a delightful thing, and at this time of day it can be published without risk to his reputation, so I have got leave from Mrs. Brooke's executors to print it here, with the prose passage leading up to it.

### DEATH OF JOHN RUMP

It may have become apparent that personally I do not approve of John Rump. He was a failure. He might have been a thousand splendid things. He was—an English Gentleman. He might have seen—he was blind; have heard—he was deaf. Infinite chances lay about him—he was an English Gentleman.

Yet we may pity him now, lying there through that long March night, helpless in the hands of his like. In that stuffy room were no watching angels, no 'Justice and Mercy of God,' no 'Death as an Emperor with all his Court.' No sublimity or solemnity of leaving this world was there; no awe and pomp of dying; but worry, heat and tangled bed-clothes; an incompetent doctor, and tired-eyed, gulping relations;

injections of oxygen and God knows what; and, bared of gentility, John Rump, blue-lipped, fighting for breath, helpless and pitiable as a blind kitten in a water-butt, or an insect crushed underfoot; drugs and fuss, gasping and snivelling.

Outside, in the snow-covered town, perfectly silent under the faint approach of morning, were peace and mystery, colour and beauty and joy; things that John had never known.

### EPILOGUE IN HEAVEN

*(Everywhere there is a subdued air of expectancy. The archangels, massed effectively at the back, are wearing scarlet for the occasion. The harps and trumpets tune up. St. Cecilia waves the bâton. The first semi-chorus of angels on the left sings:)*

Home, out of time and space,  
 The wanderer is turning  
 Immortal feet;  
 The white and eager face,  
 The thirsting mouth and burning  
 Eyes we'll regret,—  
 One that has found his grace,  
 One that has slaked his yearning,  
 One out of imperfection grown complete.

*(Second semi-chorus on the right)*

What will he bear with him, what will he bring to us  
 From the world where laughter and love are rife,  
 Great dreams to report to us, songs to sing to us,  
 Spoils well won from the heat of the strife?  
 Will he come like a glad-eyed silent lover,  
 Or slow and sorry that all is over,  
 Or sudden and splendid and swift as the spring to us,  
 Fresh and laughing from lovely life?

THE DEATH OF JOHN RUMP

(Full chorus)

As the ending to a story,  
As the light dies in the west  
When the birds turn home at even,  
Glad and splendid will he come,  
He, the victor into glory,  
He, the weary to his rest,  
The immortal to his heaven,  
The wanderer home.

FIRST SERAPH (*pointing downwards*)

I see a speck, immediately below.

MANY LITTLE CHERUBS Bravo! bravo! bravo!

SECOND SERAPH I see it too. A black speck. Very far!

CHERUBS Huzza! huzza! huzza!

THIRD SERAPH

(*Excitedly*) 'Tis him! 'tis him! upon his upward way!

CHERUBS Hurray! hurray! hurray!

GOD (*Rising*) I do espy him like a fretful midge,  
The while his wide and alternating vans  
Winnow the buxom air. With flight serene  
He wings amidst the watery Pleiades;  
Now Leo feels his passage, and the Twins;  
Orion now, and that unwieldy girth  
Hight Scorpio; as when a trader bound  
For Lamda or the isle of Mogador,  
Freighted with ambergris and stilbium,  
And what rich odours . . .

(*The remaining 127 lines are lost in the increasing hubbub. Enter, from below on the left, JOHN RUMP in top-hat, frockcoat etc., bearing an umbrella. He stands impassive in the middle.*)

GOD John Rump, of Ballham, Leeds, and Canterbury,  
Why are you wearing hideous black clothes?

RUMP Because I am an English Gentleman.



A NUMBER OF PEOPLE

GOD John Rump, we gave you life and all its wonder.  
What splendid tidings have you got to tell?

RUMP God, I have been an English Gentleman.

GOD Infinite splendour has been in your power;  
John Rump, what have you got to show for life?

RUMP God, I have been an English Gentleman.

GOD (*Rising angrily*)

Was it for this we sent you to the world,  
And gave you life and knowledge, made you man,  
Crowned you with glory? You could have worked  
and laughed,  
Sung, loved, and kissed, made all the world a dream,  
Found infinite beauty in a leaf or word. . . .  
. . . Perish eternally, you and your hat!

RUMP (*Not wincing*)

You long-haired æsthetes, get you out of heaven!  
I, John Rump, I, an English Gentleman,  
Do not believe in you and all your gushing.  
I am John Rump, this is my hat, and this  
My umberella. I stand here for sense,  
Invincible, inviolable, eternal,  
For safety, regulations, paving-stones,  
Street-lamps, police, and bijou-residences  
Semi-detached. I stand for Sanity,  
Comfort, Content, Prosperity, top-hats,  
Alcohol, collars, meat. Tariff Reform  
Means higher wages and more work for all.

*(As he speaks, GOD and the seraphic multitude grow faint, mistier and mistier, become ineffectually-wavering shadows, and vanish. The floor of Heaven rocks . . . the thrones and the glassy sea . . . all has vanished. JOHN RUMP remains, still and expressionless, leaning on his umbrella, growing larger and larger, infinitely menacing, filling the universe, blotting out the stars . . .)*

CURTAIN

## CHAPTER XIV

### LITERARY DIVERSIONS

#### I

#### GEORGIAN POETRY

Francis Meynell—Alice Meynell—GEORGIAN POETRY—The poets—Walter de la Mare's epistles—Alistair Crowley—Ezra Pound—End of *G.P.*

I CONFESSED in my ninth chapter, with just that degree of contrition which each reader may individually deem appropriate, that for several years my interests centred in social pleasures; but the time came (though I never did, and I hope never completely shall, lose my taste for such delights) when I began to feel the want of some other object for my spare time; and a chance meeting showed me the way. One day in 1911 Lady Leslie asked me to meet Francis Meynell at luncheon. We 'fell into one another's arms,' and were very soon great friends. His chief preoccupation was with contemporary verse, a field which I had hardly entered—for till then I had preferred my poetry 'vintage;' but he poured the new wine into my old bottle, and I drank deep.

He took me to his family abode, a roomy flat at the top of a house in Granville Place, and offered me up to the Muse his mother, who received me graciously. Alice Meynell was a truly wonderful figure. She can never have been a beauty, but she was incredibly distinguished—not with any conventional upper-class distinction, for she had one or two tricks of speech which in anybody else would have been 'common,' such as 'Pardon?' instead of 'What?'—but with an

innate quality which was all her own. She once wrote a paradoxical essay to prove that the eyes were the least significant feature in a face; but her own were there to confute her, large and lustrous, very dark in colour, and at once brooding and penetrating. She was always dressed in black, and wore round her neck a black ribbon so tight-fitting and so nicely placed that one had the impression her head had been cut off as if with Saladin's scimitar, and re-fastened with skill and reverence, but precariously, on her shoulders. She was austere, but exceedingly beneficent—it appeared that no member of her family would have their shoes mended except by a cobbler who was at one and the same time a Roman Catholic and such a bad cobbler that he had few other customers. In short, even the knowledge that she had been the Egeria of Coventry Patmore, George Meredith, and Francis Thompson, could hardly add to the impressiveness of her personality; and when I came to study her writings, I was overcome with admiration.

The flat was a hotbed of literature, for Mrs. Meynell combined with the most exacting taste an unsurpassable generosity in welcoming every scintilla of fresh promise—the sparks might go out, but at any rate they would have had their chance. The country seemed to be pullulating with new poets; but there were two 'events' of that year which to my mind put it past a doubt that a golden age was beginning. One was Masfield's *Everlasting Mercy*, which I read in such a turmoil of excitement that I have never dared read it again, for fear of not recapturing the rapture. The other was Rupert Brooke's *Poems*.

I described the inception of *Georgian Poetry* in my memoir of Rupert, and I must here be allowed to quote myself: "There was a general feeling among the younger poets that modern English poetry was very good, and sadly neglected by readers. Rupert announced one evening, sitting half-undressed on his bed, that he had conceived a brilliant scheme. He would write a book of poetry, and publish it as a

selection from the works of twelve writers, six men and six women, all with the most convincing pseudonyms. That, he thought, *must* make them sit up. It occurred to me that as we both believed there were at least twelve flesh-and-blood poets whose work, if properly thrust under the public's nose, had a good chance of producing the effect he desired, it would be simpler to use the material which was ready to hand. Next day (September 20th it was) we lunched in my rooms with Gibson and Drinkwater, and Harold Monro and Arundell del Re (editor and sub-editor of the *Poetry Review*), and started the plan of the book which was published in December under the name of *Georgian Poetry, 1911-1912.*' . . .

This book and its successors went up like a rocket, but there came a time when they seemed to have come down like a stick. My proud ambiguous adjective 'Georgian' (which I had maintained against some opposition because it was the only way of marking my belief that a new era had begun—Eras are always christened after Sovereigns) became a term of derision, and I began to resign myself to forfeiting the 'place beside Tottel' which Gosse had foretold for me.\* But of late years I have perked up again. Such books as Frank Swinnerton's *The Georgian Literary Scene* and Herbert Palmer's *Post-Victorian Poetry* have raised the G. P.s from the trough of the wave; and what is in a sense even more encouraging, a young writer, Rupert Croft-Cooke, has written about them with bursting enthusiasm in his *How to get more out of Life*. If I had been writing before this welcome change of tone was heard, I should probably have followed the example of the girl in William de Morgan whose way it was to 'run with the hare and apologize to the hounds when they came up;' but now I feel that I can once more hold my head reasonably high, and that in discussing the books I am not patting a dead horse.

\* See page 114.

I do want it to be clearly understood, by anyone who takes an interest in the matter, that my sole and simple object was to provide a means by which writers whose work seemed to me to be beautiful and neglected might find a hearing from the reading public—to get the light out from under the bushel. This, and this only, was the ‘definite aim’ of which I spoke in my first preface. I had no smallest intention of founding a school, or of tracing a course for Poetry to follow; for such enterprises I was ill-equipped, in knowledge, in leisure, and in self-esteem. When Mr. Herbert Palmer draws up a list of no less than fourteen canons by which he deduces that I was guided in my choice of poets and poems, he pays my lucidity and my purposefulness a compliment which they do not deserve. I was, of course, guided by the preferences which instinct and training had formed in my mind; and these can be easily, if roughly, set forth. I liked poetry to be all three (or if not all three, at least two; or if the worst came to the worst at least one) of the following things: intelligible, musical, and racy; and I was happier with it if it was written on some formal principle which I could discern, and from which it departed, if at all, only for the sake of some special effect, and not because the lazy or too impetuous writer had found observance difficult or irksome. I liked poetry that I wanted to know by heart, and *could* learn by heart if I had time. If Mr. Palmer had understood that this was my point of view, I think he would not have marvelled at my choice of D. H. Lawrence’s *Snapdragon* or Flecker’s *Gates of Damascus*.

‘Intelligibility’ is a relative term, and I naturally don’t use it so as to exclude the poetry of suggestion; but I hold strongly that poetry is communication, and that it is the poet’s duty, to the best of his ability, to let the reader know what he is driving at.\* Some of the moderns seem to think that to be understood is to be damned (and so far as they are speaking for themselves, they may indeed be right); but this

\* As I write this, I feel like a cousin of Maurice Baring’s who was famous for saying: ‘I may be peculiar, but I do like fresh fish.’

is an ungenerous attitude. I owe to Mr. Croft-Cooke my knowledge of the most shocking remark about *Georgian Poetry* that I have met with. A young lion of the *Granta* found difficulty in hitting on 'a succinct formula in which to dismiss it;' but he had a shot. 'Its main faults,' he wrote, 'are that it is facile, sentimental, socially and politically non-significant, *fit for people of all ages, and above all, popular.*' I gather from the phrase about social and political non-significance that the writer hailed from the Left; and I should have thought that the farther to the Left one was, the more one would wish the joy of poetry to be 'in widest commonalty spread.' To prescribe an age-limit after which it must be forgone is merely harsh; but to say that the worst fault poetry can have is to be popular, is surely to assert the doctrine of Privilege in its grossest and grimmest form. I am myself no democrat in literature, but I should never hold it against a poem that it appealed to all sorts and conditions.

I am tempted to offer here a rather epigrammatical observation (quoted from memory) which I made to Robert Herring when he asked me for my opinion of his somewhat difficult first novel. 'By all means,' I said, 'write *for* yourself, because to be read with gusto you must have written with gusto; but don't write *to* yourself.' Robert told me that if I had simply called his book 'obscure,' he would have torn my letter up in a rage; but that in the form I had given it, he found my criticism acceptable and even persuasive.

My second criterion, 'music,' is still more precarious; for the ear changes with the generations, and what is cacophony to me may well draw iron tears down the cheeks of my nephews and nieces; so I will confine myself to affirming that poetry which renounces the singing quality plucks its own wings. My third adjective, 'racy,' is perhaps too slap-dash; I mean it to imply intensity of thought or feeling, and to rule out the vapidness which is too often to be found, alas, in verse that is written with due regard to sense, sound and 'correctness.' As for the observance of form:

Christopher Hassall has condoled with me in public on my survival into an age when

All classic symmetry, respect for rules,  
Is thought the hair-shirt of fanatic fools;

but already, in the remote days of which I am writing, I was open to compromise, and some of my critics found me not nearly strict enough; Mr. Asquith, for instance, used to speak of the Georgian poets as 'Eddie's spavined team.' When Osbert Sitwell sent me one of his earlier books, I told him I didn't think that

And

was a very good line of poetry; but perhaps it is.

I remember hearing Augustine Birrell say that when a man came to be sixty, he had a choice: either to shut his ears to new verse altogether, or to make an ass of himself like Sidney Colvin over Stephen Phillips. Though I demur to this, there is enough in it to warn me off from committing myself to any expression of my self-conflicting opinions about the school which is now most in fashion. I will only recur to Gunion Rutherford's dictum about the indispensable tenth part of the Tradition,\* and venture to declare that if their work survives in time to come, it will be because it has been found to conform to that quintessential but always indefinable modicum of old belief and practice.

On the question who should be included ('incarcerated,' we called it, from a lady who came to the Poetry Bookshop and asked Harold Monro, with evident distrust in her own parts of speech, whether the same writers would be . . . incarcerated in the second volume as in the first), there was endless pro-ing and con-ing; but I forget the details, and they don't matter now. Monro was a curious and memorable figure. Giving his whole life and all his little fortune to the

\* See page 32.

cause of modern poetry, he had the force which comes from such disinterested devotion, and his Bookshop and his Review won a considerable place in the intellectual life of London; but he was wanting in *le sentiment de la mesure*, and in that 'concinnity of mind' which the Bishop found in Edmund Gosse; and partly from tormenting ill-health and partly from not giving himself time to think, he would be carried away to write foolish things. 'Bad popular poets, like Tennyson, Lewis Morris, and Kipling'—such a deliverance could only make the judicious grieve. On the death of Alfred Austin, he announced that he understood the Laureateship would 'probably' be abolished; and when I asked him his grounds for this, he answered that he hoped it would be so, and it was natural to think that what one hoped for was probable. But apart from these small embarrassments he was an admirable worker in the Vineyard, and I must always be grateful to him for his help in the matter of *Georgian Poetry*, which but for him could never have come into being.

To several contributors, too, I had special reasons for gratitude, and I would name in particular John Masefield, who put off the publication of a book to let me have the first-fruits, and Gordon Bottomley (as an appraiser of brother and so to speak nephew poets the most generous of all), whose noble play *King Lear's Wife* was for a long time only to be had in my second volume.

*Thir number last he summs. And now his heart  
Distends with pride, and hard'ning in his strength  
Glories.*

Though as I write I am every moment hardening in my strength, I am not really going to sum their number; but I can't resist picking-out some more of the names: Walter de la Mare, W. H. Davies, Flecker, Brooke; Abcercrombie and Gibson; Drinkwater, Freeman, Blunden, V. Sackville West;



D. H. Lawrence (whom it is a feather in my cap to have included before he had published a volume of verse); Squire and Shanks and Martin Armstrong; Ralph Hodgson (perhaps unique among poets in that he literally never sings but when he must, which has happened all too seldom); Graves, Nichols and Sassoon; W. J. Turner (though I must admit that before my last volume he withdrew his skirts from me in what I thought sectarian intolerance, *since when he has never written so well again*); Francis Brett Young (whose later desertion of, or by, the Muse, was a loss to both parties); Maurice Baring (whose *In Memoriam* for Bron Lucas will I am certain come to be reckoned among the great English elegies); James Stephens; and finally poor little Isaac Rosenberg, who never came into his kingdom—surely one of the most futile of all the futile sacrifices of the War, for except courage he had no quality of the soldier, and if he had lived he must have done great things.

When I survey this Catalogue, I have two main feelings; first, thankfulness for having been allowed in any degree to ease and hasten the recognition by the world at large of such high and various powers; and secondly, wonder that anybody can ever have persuaded himself to look upon these writers as a homogeneous congregation of indistinguishable mediocrities, put to shame by the appearance in their midst of a few superior freaks who had somehow got in by mistake.

The earlier volumes sold prodigiously. Half the profits went to the Poetry Bookshop, and the other half was divided up among the contributors. At a given moment, Walter de la Mare told me he had made more out of his appearances in *Georgian Poetry* than from all other publications of his verse put together; and he rewarded me with a couple of effusions, which he allows me to print here.

## GEORGIAN POETRY

### I

Alas, these millstones round my neck—  
Another cheque! Another cheque!  
Refrain, my soul; and keep thee steady:  
Strive to be—well—polite to Eddic;  
Albeit such offence is rank,  
Let him post on—and bust thy bank!  
Strive thou with patience to endure  
That iterated signature!

Ah, who can guess the cares of riches  
Who hath tasted not the lucre which is  
Root of Evil? Ugh! the pelf  
That lures thee, poet, from Thyself;  
Attires thy Muse—as far as able—  
In meretricious\* shifts of sable;  
Begilds thy honest silvering hair  
With dyes that musk the millionaire;  
O'ergluts thy belly—sack and salmon,  
Clicquot and Turtle—meats of Mammon—  
And bids the vulgar Philistine  
Go plagiarize those Works of thine.  
Groan! But however thick E. wafts  
His thumping three-times-daily drafts—  
Drafts whereat Dives scarce could sneeze—  
Still murmur 'Thanks' and whisper 'Please,'  
And meekly add: 'What grieves us most  
Is that the War has docked a post.'

### II

Here lies a meek Bard only Mammon could vex,  
Who expired in his prime of a surfeit of cheques.  
They descended in shoals, in bushels, in stacks,  
Ev'n to swear at their stamps was a deuce of a tax—

\* I sometimes wonder that Virginia Woolf has never made any capital out of the insult to Women implied in the indisputable fact that by derivation 'meretricious' is the feminine of 'meritorious'.

Though the postmen swore louder: the sacks on their backs!  
 Yet it's truth for to say this here Bard (though circuitous)  
 Expressed his best thanks for these emblems gratuitous.  
 A quagmire began Christian's pilgrimage harsh,  
 This shade's dearest hope is a Heavenly Marsh;  
 Or a Jordan, of current so tranquil and steady,  
 He'll steer his dread course with but one gentle Eddie.

October 1921.

Those of the 'Georgians' who lived in London, or happened to come up from the country, forgathered incessantly, lunching or dining in little Soho restaurants, often in company with other writers, painters and so forth. To one such occasion, Harold Monro imported a strange and baleful apparition, in conjuror's evening-dress, and sporting in the middle of his shirt-front a large diamond which perhaps looked bogus only because of the frayed and gaping stud-hole in which it wobbled—a singular contrast with the wholesome and innocent and tweed-clad personalities of Rupert Brooke, Wilfrid Gibson and the others. He talked wittily, cruelly, diabolically, and we quaked and cowered like Tweedledum and Tweedledee under the shadow of the Monstrous Crow. It was the Satanist Alistair Crowley; and for once in my life I felt I had been in the presence of Evil with a capital E.

Another time, the main table overflowed, and I found myself *tête-à-tête* at a *Katzentisch* with Ezra Pound. This author has of late been discovered in the *New Statesman* and elsewhere as less of a scholar than he had given the public to understand: he seems to be like the character in George Eliot who 'knew Latin' in general, but was apt to be defeated by any particular piece of Latin; and since he has repeatedly lifted up his horn against the poets who claim my allegiance, I have no compunction in recording the small incident which implanted in me a lasting suspicion of his artistic seriousness, and what the Poetry Reviewer called the authenticity of his trumpet. In the middle of dinner he asked me if I was up

in the new system of quantitative verse; and as I had studied William Stone's paper on the subject and been further indoctrinated by Robert Bridges, I admitted that I was. Thereupon he produced a version of Sappho's ode to Aphrodite, and begged me to tell him if he had made any mistakes. He had; and when I pointed them out, he put the paper back in his pocket, blushing murkily, and muttering that it was only a first attempt. 'Judge of my surprise' when some weeks later the piece appeared in the *Poetry Review* without a single amendment.

Here I must drag in a witticism perpetrated by a young painter friend of mine (whom I will not name, lest I bring down thunderbolts on his head) after a performance of *Murder in the Cathedral*. It was really quite innocuous, as he had admired the play, and only made the joke for its own sake: 'Tis a tale told by an Eliot, full of Pound and fury.'

All things must have an end. The first volume of *Georgian Poetry* sold 15,000 copies, the second 19,000, the third 16,000, the fourth 15,000, and the fifth 8,000. This was a pretty strong hint, and I announced the close of the undertaking, not only because of the evident falling-off in public receptivity, but for other reasons which will appear from a letter I wrote to Monro in June 1925, in reply to a proposal that we should after all bring out a sixth volume so as to 'round off the Series by suggesting new directions.' Someone else, he said, might make the choice of poems if I didn't feel up to it, but in any case I must write an Introduction. I answered as follows:

'MY DEAR HAROLD,—

'I have been thinking carefully over your letter, but I haven't succeeded in confuting the arguments which decided us a few months ago to announce that there would be no more *Georgian Poetry* books. The chief reason is that the Series seems to me to have done its

work. We set out with the single object of stimulating public interest in contemporary poetry, and I shall always cherish the belief that the books had a great deal to do with the marked growth of that interest which there has undoubtedly been within the thirteen years since we began. But whether *propter* or merely *post* what I like to think of as our success, there has been a pullulation of other anthologies which cover much the same ground as ours, and which, by appearing at shorter intervals, have taken the bread out of our mouths. If I tried to make a choice from the poetry which has been published since our last volume, I should find that the field has already been most efficiently reaped.

‘The other point is what you call the new directions. In my own opinion, I have always been catholic to a fault! But everyone must have his preferences, and mine have been for verse which seemed to me to be in the direct line of tradition. I will not say that the new directions are not in that line, *de peur*, as M. Bergeret said, *d’offenser à la beauté inconnue*; but I own that my feeling towards their chief exponents is one of tepid and purblind respect, which would make me quite the wrong person to anthologize them, even if they had any wish to be anthologized by me, which is more than doubtful. And I hope it isn’t dog-in-the-mangerish to feel that after being solely responsible for the previous books I should not care to come forward as sponsor for a selection made by somebody else from work with which I wasn’t really in sympathy; still less to make my exit with the gesture of moribund salutation which you seem to suggest. So I hope you won’t be vexed if I stick to what we settled.

‘Yours ever,

‘E.M.’

After this second quietus, *Georgian Poetry* was hushed in grim repose.

## II

## TRANSLATION

Fables of La Fontaine—Stephen Gooden's Illustrations—  
National Register

This chapter bids fair to be like a tadpole with three tails, for I shall not find nearly so much to say in the rest of the sections; but my version of La Fontaine's Fables bulks too large in my own map of my life not to have a short one to itself. 'I hope,' I said in my mind when I finished it, parodying Keats—'I hope I shall be among the English translators after my death.'

If, even the day before I started it, the Angel Gabriel had told me the time would come when I should publish nearly ten thousand lines of verse, incredulity would be the mildest word for my reception of his prophecy; yet he would have been right. I knew that I had a trained faculty for expression, and that if I had anything to say, I could say it tolerably well; but I was born without the smallest glimmer of invention—even as a child I hadn't told myself stories. Once, indeed, I began to write a novel, and got as far as the first two sentences, which were as follows:

'Diamond Aubyn, whose mother died when she was born in 1894, was christened, by her sorrowing father's choice, after Sir Isaac Newton's puppy, who "little knew what mischief he had done." As, however, most people could imagine no reason for calling a girl by this name except that she was born in the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, our heroine enjoyed through life the advantage of being generally supposed to be three years less than her actual age.'

After that it petered out—it was evidently past praying

for that I should ever make up anything out of my own head. But La Fontaine came to the rescue, and I owe to him seven of my most enjoyable years.

I had loved him from my first reading. Luckily, he had never been given me for lessons, and I hadn't even been taught to recite *Maître Corbeau* in the nursery, so I came fresh to him at Cambridge. I immediately learnt thirty or forty of the Fables by heart, and these took a high place in my permanent repertory of poems to say to myself on the way to sleep. Thirty years later, on an epoch-making night in the summer of 1924, I was beginning on *Les Obsèques de la Lionne*, when suddenly, for no reason, I took it into my head, instead of repeating the French, to put it into English verse; and by the time sleep came upon my eyelids I had done some ten or a dozen lines. When I woke up next morning I recollected them, and found them, to my surprise, not too bad. I finished the fable, and appetite growing with what it fed on, did two or three more, which I sent to Jack Squire, who accepted them for the *London Mercury*.

Very soon after this I set out with my chief, J. H. Thomas, on an Empire-Parliamentary-Association visit to South Africa, and took the Fables with me, as an alternative occupation to deck-tennis and discobolism, for the halcyon voyage. It became one of the regular diversions of our party, which included statesmen no less eminent than Lord Hailsham, Lord Burnham, Lord Snell, Sir Douglas Hacking and Sir William Brass, to hear me read out my day's work in the evening. The fame of my productions percolated through the ship: they were recited at the concerts, and shady-looking Johannesburg financiers begged for private readings, which what they made of I could by no means guess. This was all very heartening. I went on with the good work on our trek in South Africa and on the return voyage, which was also halcyon, and came home with a harvest of forty-two fables, which by the good offices of Mrs. Belloc Lowndes, always the most serviceable woman in the literary



To Eddie  
from J.H.

J. H. THOMAS

*From a photograph by Hamilton & Russell*





world, were accepted by Heinemanns, and published before the end of the year.

The critics were kind to me, and in 1925 I brought out a second little book of forty-eight, making ninety in all, or rather more than a third of the whole; but I had still not dared to dream of a complete translation. By this time, however, to quote one of my own lines:

‘The vessel smacked, the stuff had ta’en its ply,’

and I could hardly sooner have stopped than I could stop breathing. Translation is an ideal part-time job, because there is nothing to plan ahead, and you can take it up at any moment, like a sampler; and often and often, as I walked down the Strand to my Office, I would be visited from on high with a *mot juste* which had been eluding me for weeks. By the end of the fourth year, I had the whole thing roughed out, and Heinemanns had undertaken to ‘do’ it when the time came.

The next three years went in the most assiduous ‘polishing,’ which was an even subtler pleasure. I felt as a tailor whose heart is in his work must feel when he moulds a coat on a back that is worthy of his art, smoothing and modelling and paring-away till the fit is perfect. My standard of accuracy rose and rose, till I was painfully ashamed of the two little published books, every other line of which had to be amended. My task added a zest to my general reading, for I was always on the qui vive for words that I could turn to account; and as every line of the Fables was present in my mind, I found in other books a surprising number of ‘parallel passages’, with which I perhaps ostentatiously larded my footnotes. Rhyming, too, was a joy which increased with indulgence and the facility it brought. (It may be worth while to set down a criterion of the ideal rhyme which I have never seen formulated, viz., that it should be impossible for the reader to decide which of the

words, if either—for sometimes they are absolutely twin-born—was brought in for the purpose of rhyming with the other. This is of course a counsel of perfection; and equally of course, it doesn't apply to rhymes introduced for their very own sake, such as Byron's 'intellectual' and 'hen-pecked you all.')

There was thrown in the delight of an occasional visit to my illustrator, Stephen Gooden, who is to my mind one of the great copper-engravers of the world. Heinemanns had inclined to the charming French artist Laboureaux, who would indeed have been a most honorific collaborator; but I was resolute that my tribute to La Fontaine should be all-English, and had set my heart on Gooden from the first, on the strength of his illustrations to the Nonesuch Anacreon. I got my way, to the chagrin of George Moore, who was equally resolved to have him for *The Brook Kerith*, and was obliged to wait. Steve lived at Bishop Stortford, where on one visit I found him occupied with a field-mouse which was sitting for *Un Animal dans la Lune*, and for which he had turned a little packing-case into a bower of greenery, with two floors, and a ladder up which the mouse was expected to retire for the night; so we hoped it was enjoying its fortnight of captivity. The Owl in the tail-piece to Book XI is likewise the portrait of an actual bird, which he providentially met with in a neighbour's aviary. 'Remarkable men,' as Henry James observed, 'find remarkable conveniences.' His skill was a birthright, and he worked with a set of graving-tools that had come down to him from his grandfather, though for the powerful lamp with which he turned night into day he was indebted to the most recent Science.

But the first tail of the tadpole mustn't be allowed to grow any longer. At the end of the seven years (which in view of our modern 'speeding-up' Horace might perhaps have agreed to accept as a substitute for his nine) the book was published in two volumes, in what is so vulgarly called an

*édition de luxe*, which was all taken up, doubtless because Stephen Gooden is a 'collector's man'; and in 1933 there was what might be called an *édition de confort*. Though this was by no means a 'flop', it could hardly be described as a best-seller; but as a copy is still sold now and then, I allow myself to hope that in the long run Oblivion may be denied this dainty morsel.

One of the Fables, *Le Lion s'en allant en guerre* (V. 19), has suddenly become so topical that I can't restrain myself from reproducing it here under the new title of

## NATIONAL REGISTER.

King Lion planned a martial expedition,  
 Held a War Council, and dispatched a mission  
 Calling the creatures to his banner.  
 Each was allotted his especial sphere:  
 The Elephant upon his back  
 To bring the necessary gear,  
 And fight in his accustomed manner:  
 The Bear to weight the massed attack,  
 The Fox to dupe the foe with slim cajoleries,  
 The Monkey to distract them with his drolleries.  
 'Those lumbering Donkeys must go home,' said one,  
 'Likewise the Hares, who always funk and run.'  
 'Nay,' said the King, 'by no means let them go,  
 For both are needful to complete the host:  
 The Ass, as Trumpeter, shall scare the foe,  
 The Hare take service in the Army Post.'

The wise man finds a use for everything,  
 And 'tis the wisdom of a King  
 To know his humblest subject's quality,  
 And make each serve in his degree.

III

DIABOLIZATION

Definition — Christopher Hassall — George Moore —  
Maurice Baring — Other Victims — Dorothy Sayers —  
Letter from Logan Pearsall Smith

I must hasten to explain this forbidding word. When Christopher Hassall started bringing me his poems to pick holes in, I enjoined him on no account to suppose that I should expect or wish him to act on my suggestions unless they satisfied his own judgement: my part was merely that of the *Advocatus Diaboli*, calling his notice to points that might seem open to question. From this chance expression he coined the verb 'diabolize' and the corresponding nouns. I hope they may be admitted to the language; for they supply an evident want. The process which they signify is as old as English Poetry. 'O Moral Gower,' said Chaucer in the penultimate stanza of *Troilus and Criseyde*:

'O Moral Gower, this book I directe  
To thee, and to thee, Philosophical Strode,  
To vouchensauf, ther nede is, to correcte  
Of youre benignetes and zeles goode;'

but it has never till now been given a name.

The office of diabolizer is one of real utility. *Aliquando bonus dormitat Homerus*. Almost every writer is bound to make mistakes, and many will tell you that after a while they become blind to what they have written: a fresh eye can do an infinity of good in little ways. George Moore was aggrieved when a critic complained that a stable-boy who had been Jack at the beginning of *Esther Waters* reappeared at the end as Jim. 'There was I,' he said, 'exhausted with

writing a masterpiece, and now I'm to be scolded because I hadn't enough energy left to look back and see what I'd called the stable-boy in the first chapter.' That is where a diabolizer would have come in handy. In my capacity as translator, I likened myself to a tailor fitting a coat: a diabolizer is rather a prinking lady's maid, fussing round with pins and curling-tongs, and scrutinizing at angles from which her charge cannot see herself. 'Oh Miss Clara, Miss Clara,' cried Sir Julius Benedict as Clara Novello rotated to show off her new dress, 'your backside is even so beautiful as your frontside!' and till that can be said all is not well. I like to think that I have been of service to English letters in this literally 'ancillary' capacity.

I had never imagined that my studies in 'Pure Scholarship' for the second part of my *Tripes* could be of any possible utility in later life; but it turned out that the emendation of ancient texts was excellent training for a proof-reader; and I think it may be said of a classical education in general that it equips one to judge if an author has actually said what he meant to say, or something quite different, or nothing at all. And I had another qualification for the job. The governessy side of my nature, to which I have already confessed, is in some ways rather tiresome; but it does imply a disinterested passion for perfection in others, and for things done decently and in order; and the thought that I have removed a blemish from a proof or manuscript before the book is published gives me a glow. It is the same kink which sends me into my hostesses' gardens with a secator, snipping off deadheads and 'tidying' for hours on end.

My first attempt was on my Cambridge friend Oswald Sickert's forgotten novel *Helen*, after which my talent lay in its napkin for many years. I think the next to rope me in was Maurice Baring, who on a sudden call to the Far East left me with a volume of his Russian essays to see through the press. I took my responsibility very seriously, and spent the evenings of the next fortnight with my head in a wet

towel, drinking strong coffee, surrounded by dictionaries, encyclopædias, and sets of the principal European authors, from which I feverishly verified every quotation that Maurice had drawn from his wide and inaccurate reading. The strain must have been too great, for at one disastrous moment my mental vision was obscured. Maurice was telling of an afternoon in the Hyde Park of St. Petersburg, when he had sight of the Czarina driving in an open carriage, and wondered, as the exquisite vision called up the memory of Marie Antoinette, whether if Revolution came ten thousand swords would leap from their scabbards in championship of so much grace and loveliness. But by an aberration, for 'ten thousand', he had substituted some numeral void of romance, I think it was 4,500; and I noticed nothing, and the absurdity was printed off and given to the world. Maurice was justifiably furious, and vowed that never more should I be proof-reader of his. This set-back might well have been the end of my career as a book-vet; but when the printer of the *National Review* made him say that Gray's *Elegy* was admitted by French critics to be one of the four best love-poems in the French language, he relented, and restored me to my function. On the appearance of the new work, I looked eagerly at the preface to see in what terms my services were acknowledged, and found that he had merely thanked 'the scholar who had read his proofs'. On my complaining of this injustice, he said he had acted for the best: he was afraid I might have left in something silly like the 4,500 swords, and thought it kinder not to name me. As he had played me the same trick in *The Puppet-Show of Memory*, calling me in the first edition merely 'E., a Cambridge student', because as he explained I cut such a poor figure in his anecdotes of Heidelberg, I made up my mind that I must look elsewhere for fame.

How it came to be bruited abroad that I was available for this kind of work, I can't now remember; but certainly my clientèle grew and grew. I have been told that in the early

days of Knighthoods for Dominion statesmen—the long-vanished days in which on this side of the globe Glasgow was known as the City of Dreadful Knights—the Australians interpreted the letters ‘K.C.M.G.’ as ‘Kindly Correct My Grammar’. I can’t refrain from pluming myself on the number of distinguished writers who have awarded me this decoration, and singling out a few of them. Winston Churchill’s proofs were of course for many years part of my official duties, and he has kept me on in their service to this day. (Here I must do an act of tardy justice. In one of the *World Crisis* volumes he used a coinage of his own, ‘choate’, to signify the opposite of ‘inchoate’. I knew quite well that the word had no right to exist, and it was my clear duty to warn him; but I thought it expressive and pleasing, and there is no stint of shaky words in English, so I let it pass; and though he forgave me, I have never forgiven myself for the obloquy it brought on his head.) The volumes of Desmond MacCarthy’s collected works have passed through my hands: so have all Francis Brett Young’s novels from *The Portrait of Clare* onwards; and the last three books of Somerset Maugham (who says he will retain me, *ex abundantiore cautela*, in what is almost a sinecure). ‘Many more too long’: Walter de la Mare’s *Midget*, Harold Nicolson’s youthful book on Tennyson, George Mallory’s on Boswell, David Cecil’s on the Early Victorian Novelists, John Drinkwater’s on Byron, Ronald Storrs’ *Orientalisms*, Clemence Dane’s *The Moon is Feminine*, the Life of Edmund Gosse and other books by Evan Charteris, and Lady Wemyss’s privately-printed *Family Record*. I wondered if I smelt a faint whiff of acrimony in Lady Cynthia Asquith’s inscription in the copy she gave me of *The Spring House*:

‘To the onlie begetter of the ensuing commas.’

A more questionable line of the business, which I also pursue, is what I may call unsolicited diabolization. I once



sent Austin Dobson a list of mistakes in one of his books on the Eighteenth Century, saying in perfect good faith that it might be useful for the second edition. He thanked me with all his inexpugnable courtesy, but begged me never to do such a thing again, as his books never did go into second editions, and he would rather not know of their defects. I got an interesting letter from Charles Whibley about some notes I sent him on his edition of W. P. Ker's *Essays*. He told me his eyesight was failing, and that a purblind writer could no longer rely on what had formerly been his safeguard: a race of intelligent proof-readers who took an interest in their work, and had enough cultivation and general knowledge to keep their author straight. (But it is hard to say which is the greater hazard, a little learning in a proof-reader, or none. Victor Lytton employed a professional to read his *Life of his grandfather*; and the poor man, finding that Bulwer had described Victor Hugo as 'a monster, *informe*, but *ingens*', had substituted '*informé* but *ingénu*', thus in one ample gesture giving away both his Latin and his French.)

My greatest triumph in this kind had to do with Conrad's *Tales of Unrest*, which were prepared for publication after his death by Richard Curle. When I sent him my suggestions on the text, he told me he had printed the stories from the American magazines in which they had first appeared, and that on consulting the original manuscripts he found all my conjectures confirmed.

I have sometimes made a misprint an excuse for writing to a stranger whose work I have admired, and this was the starting-point of my friendship with Geoffrey Dennis, whose *Mary Lee* had thrilled me to such a degree that I felt I *must* have a shot at making his acquaintance. And I had an amusing correspondence with Miss Dorothy Sayers, in the first chapter of whose *Nine Tailors* a Baronet had been murdered, leaving an only daughter, but also a younger brother (a most unpleasant character) who

remained plain 'Mr.' throughout the book. Remembering that

'Nowhere is accurate detail more vital  
Than in matters relating to rank and to title'

(I quote from memory the letter with which the Editor of *Debrett* accompanies his requests for diabolizations), I felt it was my duty to ask Miss Sayers why Edward had not succeeded to the baronetcy. She answered that as a matter of fact there had been an intermediate brother, who had emigrated to Fiji and died leaving a son by a native wife; but that as this circumstance had no bearing on the story, she hadn't thought it worth mentioning. 'Anyhow,' she added in a vindictive postscript, 'nothing shall induce me to let Edward be a Baronet.'

I have not spared the mighty dead. In 1924 I wrote for the *London Mercury* a long paper on R. W. Chapman's great edition of Jane Austen, which brought me a delightful letter from Logan Pearsall Smith:

'Many thanks for letting me see these fascinating emendations in the sacred text. It seems to me that you beat Chapman on his own ground, and will go down to posterity with Bentley and Theobald and the other great emendators. Most of your suggestions carry complete conviction, and I have added them to my text. . . . Here is a curious linguistic point, of interest at least to an "idiomaniac" like myself. In *Emma*, p. 468, Jane Austen uses the words "all right" before they had become an idiom—"It was all right, all open, all equal."

'I was inordinately solaced to find that you had detected a misprint of Chapman's own. We are all human, and those of us whose pasts are spotted and pimpled with misprints delight in derelictions of this

kind in the supposedly impeccable. But you point out his slip with great kindness, and I do not think that it is on this account that he has taken to his bed.'

On Sir John Murray's publication of *Lord Byron's Correspondence* in 1922, I made a good many conjectures which were nearly all borne out when Mary Lady Lovelace let me see her copies of the letters at Wentworth House. But my chief exploit was another paper in the *Mercury*, dealing with the text of Marcel Proust's stupendous octology, for which I invented the alternative title *À la Recherche des Jeunes Filles Perdues*. It contained a ribald quip which I hardly expected to escape Jack Squire's editorial pencil; but as it did, I will give it a second innings here. 'Proust,' I said when I came to the subject of punctuation, 'does not seem to have taken much interest in commas, even when they were *inverted*.' My article found favour with Proust's great friend and admirer Walter Berry, whom I had never met; and he rewarded me with an autograph letter of our common hero's. It was also the foundation of a friendship with Proust's incomparable translator, Charles Scott-Moncrieff.

But all this is tempting Nemesis. My pleasure in the first copy of my La Fontaine translation turned to ashes when I opened it at the third Fable of all, and perceived a glaring misprint which (unless the Prince of Printer's Devils had intervened at the last moment) must have been a dozen times under my sedulous eye when it was in its prime; and after all this boasting, it will serve me right if the present work of my weary age turns out to be pock-marked with errors, obscurities, and solecisms.

## THE LITTLE BOOK

### IV

#### THE LITTLE BOOK

The Dream Ship — Robert Bridges — Walter Raleigh —  
Rudyard Kipling—Other Contributors—Max Beerbohm

In 1911 Lady Diana Manners gave me for Christmas a little sixpenny paper book on the cover of which she had painted in water-colour the most ravishing Dream Ship, fit for the Ancient Mariner, something between a caravel and a galleon, wafted evidently by Zephyrs over the level brine. What on earth was I to do with it? I couldn't bring myself to profane it with 'Addresses' or telephone-numbers or even Happy Thoughts. . . . I had an inspiration: I would ask all the poets I knew to copy out in it a poem apiece. I made a beginning at once: as time went on I had to get it bound up with extra pages; and it now represents just under a hundred names. I have read that Wordsworth's daughter Dora Quillinan had a book of the same kind a hundred years ago, but in our own day I think mine must be unique.

It leads off with Thomas Hardy's *In Time of the Breaking of Nations*, with an unpublished improvement in the last line but one:

'War's annals will *cloud* into night'

instead of 'fade'. Robert Bridges comes next. He turned up his fastidious nose at the sixpenny paper, and inscribed in his august and shapely writing on a page of 'hand-wove', which I pasted in, his then unpublished 'quantitiv' version of Sappho's ode to Aphrodite, with that lovely stanza:

'Harnessing thy fair flutterers, that earthward  
Swiftly drew thee down to the dusky mountains,

Multitudinously winging from unseen  
Heights o' the wide air,'

which is in itself a sufficient fruit of all the pains he took with his experiments in quantity. Another who shrank from writing directly in the book, but for a different reason, was Walter Raleigh, who thought that if he did, he would seem to be claiming the high status of Poet. He likewise, therefore, wrote out on his own notepaper, under the title of *The Jongleur*, the capital piece which was printed after his death under the heading of its first line, 'Stand on the Trestles of the world,' in the volume named *Laughter from a Cloud*, which by a mistake that would have enchanted him was entered in the *Sunday Times*' list of 'Books of the Week' as *Laughter from a Colonel*.

Henry James used to say that 'there were no stamps which he used' (of course for his own purposes) 'with so much gusto' as those which had accompanied a request for his autograph. Other great men have been no less recalcitrant; but I have read in the *Reminiscences* of an American journalist that of all the quarries of the autograph-hunter none was so notoriously unattainable as Rudyard Kipling. If I had known this, I should never have dared to ask him for a contribution; but in blessed innocence I did, and got from him an exquisite transcript of 'Cities and thrones and powers', which I could see that he had actually been at the pains to write first in pencil, so that he could ink it over without fear of a mistake. D. H. Lawrence, on the other hand, took the thing rather casually, and transcribed his *Cherry Robbers* from memory with so little circumspection that he was obliged to subjoin a note: 'The first verse went wrong, but I patched it up.' Another rare bird was A. E. Housman, who gave me 'Into my heart an air that kills' as a reward for publishing *Georgian Poetry*.

T. E. Lawrence took a great interest in the little book, and persuaded me, by no means against my will, to depart



Secret

Oh! Death will find me, long before I tire  
Of watching you; and swing me suddenly  
Into the shade and loneliness and mire  
Of the last land! There, waiting patiently,

One day, I think, I'll feel a cool wind blowing,  
 See a slow light across the Stygian tide,  
 And hear the Dead about me stir, unknowing,  
 And trouble. And I shall know that you have died.

and watch you, a broad-browed and smiling doctor,  
Pass, light as ever, through the lightless host,  
Quietly, ponder, start and swan, and gleam —  
Most individual and bewitching ghost! —

and turn, and toss your brown delightful head  
Ruminating, among the ancient Dead.

12. 10. 1904

March 24 1912

from my principle of only including writers whom I knew in person by letting him get me a page of Charles Doughty, and an Arabic poem by King Feisal, of which T. E. supplied a translation as follows:

‘If you keep unstained the honour of your house  
Any rags you wear will look beautiful  
If you fail to overcome yourself  
You will receive no honour from the world.’

I always felt flattered when eminent friends whom I had not specially thought of as poets expressed a wish to figure in my collection, and brought forth treasures from their private store-houses. James Barrie volunteered a song from *Quality Street*; George Wyndham came forward with a good sonnet, Sir Ian Hamilton with a dashing ballad about a dance on board ship which was interrupted by a tornado, but who cared? And lastly, Walter Sickert, with a *gaillardise* which obliges me to turn over two pages when I am showing the book to visitors of strict views.

Others among my chief treasures are W. B. Yeats’s *Cloths of Heaven*, Alice Meynell’s *At Night*, Rupert Brooke’s sonnet, ‘Ah, Death will find me,’ Flecker’s *Yasmin*, and W. H. Davies’s *The Kingfisher*.

Only one piece was written specially for the book. Max Beerbohm, when I asked him for a contribution, told me that nothing occurred to him at the moment, but he would probably be able to think of something if I would send him the volume, which I did. It so happened that the most recent addition was a poem by John Galsworthy, *The Prayer*, which I thought very noble and grand:

‘If on a Spring night I went by  
And God were standing there,  
What is the prayer I would cry  
To Him? This is the prayer:



A N U M B E R   O F   P E O P L E

‘O Lord of courage grave,  
O master of this night of Spring,  
Make firm in me a heart too brave  
To ask Thee anything!’

When the book came back two or three days later, I found that Max had written on the next page:

‘If I popped in at Downing Street  
And Eddie were at home,  
What is the pome wherewith I’d greet  
Him? I will write the pome:

‘O Eddie, dear old boy,  
O, C.M.G., C.B.,  
Make firm in me a heart too coy  
To write a pome for thee!’

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER XIV

THE tadpole's third tail has developed four little tails of its own, which I allow it to waggle on the chance that they may please some reader who takes an interest in textual matters. The first, second and fourth appeared, as letters to the editor, in the *London Mercury*, and the third in *The Times Literary Supplement*.

### I

An Emendation in Spenser's *Prothalamion* (1928).

'They two, forth pacing to the Rivers side,  
Received those two faire Brides their Loves delight;  
Which, at th' appointed tyde,  
Each one did make his Bryde  
Against their Brydale day, which is not long:  
Sweete Themmes! runne softly, till I end my Song.'

So stands the end of Spenser's *Prothalamion* in all the texts, down to the beautiful little reprint just issued by the Golden Cockerel Press.\* But can it be right? I admit that for all its grace and music the *Prothalamion* is one of the worst-written of our masterpieces. The epithets (goodly, gentle, etc.) are worked to death, the lines:

'There when they came, whereas those bricky towers  
The which on Themmes broad aged backe doe ryde,'

have no grammatical sequel, so that both the 'when' clause

\* To my great satisfaction, my suggestion was accepted by Mr. Renwick for his edition of Spenser (1929).

and the 'whereas' are left hanging in the air, without any semblance of a construction: Spenser has so little control over the refrain which ends every stanza that he lets it force him into wishing his two young couples 'fruitful issue *upon their Brydale day*', regardless of the inconvenience and even scandal which would result. But it is difficult to believe that even in this mood he would speak of making brides brides against their bridal day.

The two heroines are represented in the poem in the guise of swans, or 'Birdes' (Spenser could not foresee the idioms of the twentieth century). 'Birds' is spelt 'Birdes' throughout, and 'Brides' 'Brydes'. 'Brides' in the line under discussion should be 'Birdes'.

## II

An Emendation in Shelley's *Hellas* (1924).

'Victorious Wrong, with vulture scream,  
Salutes the rising sun, pursues the flying day!  
I saw her, ghastly as a tyrant's dream,  
Perch on a trembling pyramid of night,  
Beneath which earth and all her realms pavilioned lay  
In visions of the dawning undelight.'  
(*Hellas*, II. 940-945.)

Undelight! What a word!\* and what a way to describe a cataclysm! Was it worth Shelley's while to coin such a monstrosity for the sake of such a bathos?

In the next stanza we read:

'Oh bear me . . . to some toppling promontory proud  
Of solid tempest whose black pyramid,

\* I have since noticed 'undelight' in Shelley's *Ginevra*, 'vexing the sense with gorgeous undelight'; but though this weakens, it does not, I think, destroy my argument.

Riven, overhangs the founts intensely bright'ning  
Of those dawn-tinted deluges of fire.'

Here is the same picture. In both we have the 'pyramid' of darkness above, and in both we *should* have the flaming dawn beneath. 'Undelight' should be 'underlight'.

## III

An Emendation in Lamb (1936).

The text of Charles Lamb's famous letter to the exiled Manning of December 25th, 1815, deserves to be jealously safeguarded; and it may be worth while to nip a corruption which is creeping in.

Mr. E. V. Lucas in his new edition prints the following:

'What standing evidence have you of the Nativity?—  
'tis our rosy-cheeked, home-stalled divines, whose faces  
shine to the tune of *unto us a child*; faces fragrant with  
the mince-pies of half a century, that alone can  
authenticate the cheerful mystery—I feel.

'I feel my bowels refreshed with the holy tide——'

The weakness of the first detached 'I feel' is intolerable. Ainger omits it, putting a full stop after 'mystery'; but the true reading is probably Talfourd's, ' . . . the cheerful mystery—I feel, I feel my bowels refreshed.' The excited repetition of 'I feel' is in the manner of the period; compare Wordsworth's 'I hear, I hear, with joy I hear'.

## IV

## An Emendation in Trollope.

The textual criticism of Trollope is perhaps hardly a burning question; but some of your readers may be amused by an emendation.

I have been reading the second edition of *Dr. Thorne*, where in the chapter entitled War the following sentences are printed:

‘Such conversations were not without danger to poor Mary’s comfort. It came soon to be the case that she looked rather for this, *lacking more sympathy* from Beatrice, than for Miss Oriel’s pleasant but less piquant gaiety.’

The words I have italicized are nonsense; and I find that in the one-volume edition of 1888 they have been emended, with equal violence and tameness, to ‘this sort of sympathy.’ This is presumably the *textus receptus*.

But I am sure that what Trollope wrote was ‘this lachrymose sympathy.’ The word ‘lachrymose’, with an accidental gap between the ‘y’ and the ‘m’, could easily, in any handwriting less accurate than copper-plate, be mistaken for ‘lacking more’; and the printer need only add the comma after ‘this’ to soothe himself and a careless proof-reader with a phantom of meaning and grammar. The sense obtained by my conjecture is supported by an earlier sentence in the chapter: ‘Beatrice was quite as true [as Miss Oriel] in her sympathy; but she rather wished that she and Mary might weep in unison, shed mutual tears, and break their hearts together.’

## CHAPTER XV

### PICTURE-COLLECTING

Beginnings—Neville Lytton—Herbert Horne Collection—Richard Wilson—Peter Bursler—Van Aken—The Moderns—Abstract Art—Duncan Grant—Stanley and Gilbert Spencer—Paul and John Nash—John Currie—Gaudier-Brzeska—Missed Opportunities

I DON'T think I can be accused of grinding axes; but in this chapter\* there will be a whiff of the blatant beast Propaganda. For about forty years, picture-buying has been one of my principal delights. I believe Rossetti was unable to see any object with which the majority of his fellow-creatures could have been brought into the world by a sensible Creator, unless perhaps He meant them to buy pictures. I would not go so far as that; but if anything that I say can tend to spread the habit, I shall have written to some purpose, for it blesseth him that buys, and him that sells.

I remember the time when if I went to an exhibition of pictures it no more occurred to me to buy one than it occurred to me to buy a monkey if I went to the Zoo; and I think this attitude of mind was then almost universal. There was, of course, always a trade in Old Masters, and there must have been a class of persons who, to the embarrassment of their descendants, purchased the Picture of the Year at the Royal Academy; but new talent budded to blush unbought. There has been a change of late for the better,

\* I have the kind permission of *The Listener* and the Penguin Press to use as a basis for this chapter an article I contributed in 1935 to a series called *Patronage in Art To-day*, which has lately been reprinted in a 'Pelican Book' named *Art in England*.

and a great many people—some of them, I flatter myself, friends of my own, who have been fired by my example—have discovered the pleasure of owning contemporary paintings; but still not nearly enough.

I myself began, at the turn of the century, by collecting old English masters under the inspiration of Neville Lytton, who was the first person to bring the art of painting home to my bosom—till then I had admired and enjoyed pictures, but in a spirit of detachment. My earliest recorded reaction was to Turner's *Fighting Téméraire*, which I was led up to as a child on a visit to the National Gallery. 'That's a very dangerous picture,' I said in an awe-struck voice. When I was at Westminster I used to be given a season-ticket for the Royal Academy, and go into raptures over Sir Frederick Leighton's *Cymon and Iphigenia*, etc. This phase was succeeded by the usual cult of Italian Art, first Ruskinian and later Berensonian; and there was the seed of an interest in the New English Art Club, sown in me by Oswald Sickert, which I wish to goodness had borne fruit at the time; for I might have started my collection with an array of early Walter Sickerts, Augustus Johns and Wilson Steers, which were then 'within the reach of modest purses,' and might now be keeping wolves from my door.

Neville Lytton, whose initiation at the Beaux Arts I mentioned in an earlier chapter, soon rebelled against the academic French art of the day, and began to think for himself. He took against 'direct' painting, and became convinced that salvation lay in a return to the old technique, under-painting and glazing and so forth, of which he made a serious study. In water-colour likewise (which he took up with enthusiasm, disregarding the gnomic poet of the *ateliers* who taught that

'La peinture à l'huile  
Est très difficile,  
Mais c'est beaucoup plus beau  
Que la peinture à l'eau')







## HAR AND HEVA BATHING

William Blake

he went back to the early English tradition, and stood at the knees of the two Cozenses, Girtin, Cotman and the rest. At last the pleasing sorcery took proper hold of me, and whenever I had a few pounds to spare I laid them out on a drawing. My very first purchase was a lovely Girtin, of a hillside with two shacks and a line of trees, all in the tender melting browns of a moleskin, which I still look-on with pride as a creditable beginning. Our chief hunting-ground was *Palser's*, then in *Leicester Square*, but sometimes we went as far afield as old William Ward's at Richmond, where I got my exquisite Paul Sandby of Richmond Bridge.

My culmination in this line was the purchase of the collection made by Herbert Horne, who was about to settle in Italy, and thought that such 'gleanings of a northern shore' would be out of key in his new home. My Father agreed to lend me at a low rate of interest some of my Mother's money which was his for his life, and I became possessed of Horne's wooden cabinet, designed by himself, with its twelve solander cases containing about two hundred drawings of the English School, all interesting, and some of them masterpieces. The summit is perhaps Blake's *Har and Heva Bathing*,\* which is accompanied by Catherine Blake's portrait of her husband; and among the other peaks are fine sets of Richard Wilson, Alexander Cozens, Gainsborough, Rowlandson and Romney. It was a proud day for me when on Horne's death the Burlington Fine Arts Club borrowed the collection *en masse* for a commemorative Exhibition.

But I didn't stop short at drawings, and in the midst of

\* *Har and Heva* must not be so briefly dismissed. They are characters in Blake's private mythology, so grandly bodied forth that they make one wish he had illustrated the opening of *Hyperion*. A third figure, Mnetha by name, lies reclined on the farther bank of the stream, and a good deal of her person is concealed behind the two bathers; but Blake has not allowed for this, and has gone on with her legs, at the point where they reappear, just as if nothing had been hidden, so that their length is prodigious. When visitors have had their fill of reverent gazing, I sometimes relax the tension by quoting *Alice*: 'All persons more than a mile high to leave the Court.' 'I'm not a mile high,' said Alice indignantly. 'You are,' said the King—'Nearly two miles high,' added the Queen.

my modern collection I still keep what I call my 'National Gallery Wall' of old English oil-paintings, dwarfed but honoured, like the original Portiuncula of St. Francis in the Cathedral of Assisi. Here the crowning glory is Richard Wilson's *Summit of Cader Idris* (which by a singular piece of luck I bought nearly forty years ago, for I won't say how little, at Shepherd's in King Street), painted when the artist returned to his native Wales after his long sojourn in Italy. It portrays a pool at the foot of a pointed mountain-peak, and Roger Fry said of it that in the maturity of his powers Wilson had brought to the service of the scene he had loved in his youth the classic symmetry which he had learnt by the Lake of Nemi. It is now recognized as one of the painter's masterpieces: it has been seen in Paris, Vienna and Amsterdam; and I had another proud day when Kenneth Clark told me that the Trustees of the National Gallery, meeting after the Exhibition of British Art at Burlington House, had unanimously entered it on their list of the pictures which really *must* be secured for Trafalgar Square. I need hardly say that I immediately altered my will, and it is now one of my pleasures, when I visit the Gallery, to choose the place where my ghost will see it on the walls.

Under it hangs a little Crome of the Tanning Mills at Norwich, of which Laurence Binyon murmured: 'How refreshing it is for once to be shown a *genuine* Crome!' And near-by are two 'intriguing' pictures by little-known masters. One is a Restoration portrait of a lady in brown silk, bought at Sir Charles Robinson's sale at Christie's, where it was ascribed to Lely; but the sitter (who is by tradition an unspecified member of the Ashley-Cooper family) has far more character and 'psychology' than any of Lely's women. Dr. Freud would no doubt see through her at a glance, but a layman might speculate for ever on the reasons for the unhappiness of her eyes and her pinched, resentful mouth. Collins Baker took a great interest in this work, and finally attributed it to Pieter Boersseler, known in England as Peter

Bursler, on the strength of some half-dozen portraits at Bisham Abbey, painted in the 1660's. I lent it to the Seventeenth Century Exhibition at Burlington House, and before that to Philip Sassoon's 'Age of Walnut,' where he told me that its two most conspicuous admirers had been King George V and Mr. Otto Kahn.

The other curiosity represents a Village School, with a master who might be the Vicar of Wakefield, and a group of apathetic little boys in dove-grey, sealing-wax red, and other enchanting hues. I bought it from Robbie Ross as a 'speculative Hogarth,' but when I had it cleaned some years later, two bogus signatures came away, first Hogarth and then Horremans, leaving the authentic sign-manual of Van Aken, a Dutchman who worked here at the beginning of the eighteenth century. I like it all the better for being the ewe-lamb of a neglected master.

The change of heart which led me from Ancient to Modern must have come to pass in 1911, when I bought Duncan Grant's *Parrot Tulips*, painted in that year, and still one of my best treasures. I had been making friends, mainly through Robbie Ross and his Carfax Gallery, with several young painters—Stanley Spencer, Paul and John Nash, Mark Gertler and John Currie; and under the influence of these boys, as they then were, I experienced Conversion. Buying Old Masters in shops began to seem a sheeplike, soulless conventionalism. How much more exciting to back what might be roughly called one's own judgement (why 'roughly' I will presently explain), to go to the studios and the little galleries, and purchase, wet from the brush, the possible masterpieces of the possible Masters of the future! Besides, to buy an old picture did nobody any good except the dealer; whereas to buy a new one gave pleasure, encouragement and help to a man of talent, perhaps of genius. I still don't see how anyone can hesitate between the two.

My one regret was that my new orientation led to a certain parting of brass-rags with Neville Lytton. He strongly disapproved of it, and on the purchase of what is now generally held to be one of my best pictures, he was moved to write me an expostulation. I was, he said, the kind of person who might easily come to have an influence on young artists, and it was deplorable that I should give my countenance to such a slovenly piece of work. I was shaken, but not shattered; we could no longer hunt in couples, and there was an end of my pleasure in exposing my 'latest acquisitions' to his stern unbending eye.

Mrs. Churchill once bought with my concurrence a picture which didn't commend itself to Winston, and when Walter Sickert was staying at Chartwell he sought to enlist him on his side. 'Look at that picture,' he said, 'that Eddie has made Clemmie buy. Can you see anything in it?' Walter gave it the once-over, and answered: 'Our little friend Eddie is not without a certain idiot flair.' I will not disclaim this attribute, but it was not my only guide. I started my collection on no plan, but I can now perceive the system on which, without formulating it, I set to work. In one way or another I made up my mind which of the painters I knew were good judges of pictures; next I picked their brains to find out which artists they thought well of; and then I waited till I saw a work by one of those artists which aroused in me what I can only call the Lust of Possession—a curious and very pleasant sensation of tingling, or perhaps goosflesh, something like what A. E. Housman said he felt when he read an authentic poem. Then, if I had enough money at Drummonds, I bought it. This seems to me an excellent compromise between the claims of Authority and the valuable though derided and indeed highly fallible principle of 'knowing what one likes.'

I shall perhaps be expected to stand in a white sheet because, lagging behind the times, I have never bought an 'abstract' picture; but if I had done so, I should only have to

stand in a black sheet for snobbishness and hypocrisy instead. I have a deep and distant respect for abstract painting, which I have taken great though most often inefficacious pains to understand and enjoy; and I certainly have no quarrel with its upholders, except in so far as they claim that all other branches of the art are now back-numbers. Times change, and of course the arts change with them, though not (I do believe) in essence—only in accident. But there is a school which seems to teach that the old proud title, *Heir of the Ages*, is beneath the dignity of modern man, and in particular that everything which has throughout the centuries constituted the fundamental appeal of the arts must now be blown by violent cross-winds far o'er the backside of the new world into Limbo. In Poetry, of which I have already said enough, Mankind has taken eternal delight in the regularity of a metrical pattern: this is now called dancing in chains. Of Music, I speak as a child; but I am content to go by the poets. 'If music be the food of love, play on.' 'Music, when soft voices die, vibrates in the memory.' 'There is sweet music here, that softer falls than petals from blown roses on the grass.' Do not words like these point to a need of the human spirit? and is it possible to associate them with the newest mathematical developments of the art?

In Painting, 'which is our present journey,' the nature of what I called the 'eternal delight' is a complex matter; but I hope I shall not be going out of my depth if I say that the appeal to the layman of the formal elements in the art is not the only one which counts, or ought to count. The appeal of Design, though powerful, is only half-realized; that of Colour is more obvious and more consciously felt; but there is a third, which addresses an instinct more general still. What the bulk of the race has hitherto chiefly sought from the art of painting is an ever-varying interpretation, by specially-gifted persons, of the world of Nature and of Man, by which its own perceptions are enhanced, its emotions deepened, its imagination fired; and that satisfaction cannot

and must not be denied to it. For this reason, so far from standing in a white sheet, I am content and even anxious to be stigmatized as a consistent and brazen supporter of what is now slightly called Representational Art.

If I go on much longer trotting out my old-fashioned beliefs, I shall begin to repent of having in an earlier chapter respectfully twitted Mr. G. F. Watts with his wisdom of the ancients; but there is one more protest I want to make—against the use of the ill-joined word ‘escapist’ to belabour all works of art which are not directly concerned with the present discontents. The idea seems to be that having got ourselves into a mess we are in honour bound to wallow in it, and that only a coward or a milksop would wish to shirk his responsibilities by rising into a calmer and serener air. One might answer,

Who would not, finding way, break loose from Hell?

but that (though I own it appeals to me) would be thought a selfish attitude, and there may be a better chance for the argument that Art has throughout the ages offered an ‘escape’ from the material to the spiritual world, from whence the fugitive may return with a clearer eye and a braver heart to the earthly turmoil.

On a lower plane, there is another modern tenet that I should like to examine: the belief that Originality is the only thing that counts, and that to call a work ‘derivative’ is to hang it. Those who propound this doctrine are of course not so foolish as to mean that any art except the most primordial could be entirely free from derivative elements: what they do mean is, I think, that while in the sphere of expression and technique the artist must have obligations to his predecessors, his inspiration and motive force must be entirely and unmistakably his own—otherwise his work is worthless. This may be true, but I have always found a difficulty in swallowing the thesis whole. To argue the point would be tedious, and I can say all that I want to say by means of a

single simple illustration. Some years ago I had an enjoyable controversy in private correspondence with R. H. Wilenski, who had given cogent expression to the view in question. In my youth the authorship of the *Sposalizio* in the Brera, which was admitted on all hands to be a picture of the first order, was a matter of keen dispute among the cognoscenti. Some said it was by Perugino, others that it was an early work of Raphael under Perugino's influence. I have a notion that the point has now been settled, in which sense I forget—but that doesn't affect the argument which I put to Wilenski. Documentary evidence, I said, might at any moment be discovered which would prove beyond a doubt which painter the picture was by. Can it be maintained that if it turned out to be by Perugino, it would be a masterpiece, and if by Raphael, a valueless imitation? Is there not a possibility that the merit of a picture depends on what it actually is, not on the process which brought it into being? I am ashamed to say that I can't remember Wilenski's reply; but I do remember that I was not convinced.

But I must get back to my own collection. My first Duncan Grant was soon joined by his resplendent *Dancers*—and much later by a beautiful picture of carrots, a cabbage, and a long French loaf (for unlike Lord Clive, who as Boswell tells us killed himself 'because he was weary of still life,' I am very partial to that kind of subject). My next important acquisition was Stanley Spencer's *Apple-gatherers*, in which two mysterious figures in brown and purple tower above two basket-laden groups, boys on one side and girls on the other, the boys for some reason twice as big as the girls. It hung at first in my spare bedroom, but I had to find another place for it because Rupert Brooke (who usually admired the artist) showed an unexpected limitation by telling me that I couldn't expect him to sleep in a room with all those bogies.

Another picture of Stanley's hung on a syllable. I paid him a visit in his studio at Cookham, which was a ramshackle



and smelly loft over a stable, bestrewn with apple-peel and fine drawings imprinted with hobnail heels. 'Mice have strange ideas of comfort,' as the lady in the railway-carriage said to Saki when he told her that a mouse had run up the leg of his trousers; and so have some artists. From amid the confusion, Stanley brought forth a masterly self-portrait, three times life-size, glowing with genius. The Lust of Possession surged up in me, and I asked the price. 'Eighty,' I thought he said, and my heart shrivelled, for I owned no such sum; but after one frost-bitten moment I gave myself another chance. 'How much did you say?' I asked; and this time he distinctly answered 'Eighteen'; so I went back to London with the picture under my arm. I had never seen a portrait on such a scale, except in the sets of Roman Emperors that one sometimes finds in country houses; and when I asked Stanley why he had painted himself so large, he said he didn't know—he had meant it to be the ordinary size, but it had come like that. 'Next time I start a portrait,' he said, 'I shall begin it the size of a threepenny bit.'

Under my other arm I carried off a Berkshire landscape, which has since been joined on my walls by two more, *Near Halifax* and *The Lonely Tree*; and as I also possess a portrait of his brother-in-law Richard Carline and several admirable drawings, I am very well set-up with Stanley Spencers. He and his brother Gilbert, of whom I boast three examples, are a remarkable pair; and so are Paul and John Nash, whom also I have 'followed' from their beginnings. These two have, or at any rate had then, much in common; but there is a difference between them which may be roughly conveyed by saying that when Jack sits down before a landscape, his only desire is to do his best for it, whereas Paul, who likes to order Nature about, uses it as a spring-board for some construction of his own. My first Paul was a delicious water-colour tree-scape, which he disliked so much when he had finished it that he began tearing it across, as may still be seen in spite of careful mending; but it is now one of the heads of the corner,

which, as the charwomen say, 'only goes for to show.' I have also several oils, among them a lovely roseate *St. Pancras Station*, painted from his rooms in Judd Street, which anybody would take for Verona. My two best Jacks are *The Vale of Aylesbury*, and *The Cornfield*, almost too ubiquitous in the coloured reproduction, which is all very well till you see it beside the original.

I mentioned among my initiators John Currie, whom I should like to commemorate, as his great gifts were tragically extinguished too soon for him to make his name. He had a mistress called Dolly, an exceedingly beautiful red-haired white-skinned Irish girl, who was the very worst kind of mate for an artist, for she was jealous of his work, and seasonally unfaithful into the bargain. Yet in a sense they were made for one another, and each might have said 'nec tecum possum vivere nec sine te.' The round of quarrel, parting and reunion dragged on, till one night in September 1914 I came home late from the Admiralty, and found Currie waiting for me. He had been abroad by himself, and come back to find Dolly living with some one else; and this was the breaking-point. I remember his voice as he sat relaxed in a comfortable chair: 'Oh Eddie, the peace of being here!' At an ordinary time I could have kept him with me, and perhaps seen him through; but just then I was at my Office every day till the small hours, and I had to let him go. I think it was about a week later that I was rung up by a policeman, who asked if I knew a man called John Currie, because he had just killed a woman and tried to kill himself, and my name and address were in his pocket-book. I went to the hospital and found him lying in bed, mortally wounded, but tranquil. 'It was all so ugly' was the only thing he said about the events which had brought him where he was; and by a queer mercy he seemed to have no sense of his position, for he talked of nothing but what he would do when he came out of hospital. He died a day or two later, in the early springtime

of his powers. His best epitaph is Gaudier-Brzeska's word on his death: 'He was a great painter, and a magnificent fellow.'

Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, who was killed early in 1915, was probably an even greater loss to the world. I haven't often reproached myself more sorrowfully than when I learnt from Jim Ede's *Savage Messiah* what a great matter it was to him to sell an occasional drawing, and how easily I could have smoothed his path. He was so proud, and so brave and gay, that he never let me see the straits he was in; and when I went to his studio in a Putney 'Arch' he showed me nothing but high-priced sculptures, up to which I must confess that I was not at that time quite educated. I only visited him once, preferring to meet him on my own ground and keep out of the way of the volcanic Sophie Brzeska, who seemed to blow-up most of his friendships. The upshot is that I possess of him only four masterly but very slight outline-studies which, as I found from Ede's book, he gave me to quit the obligation of a dinner at a restaurant! *Mea maxima culpa*.

I seem to have nothing to add to Jim Ede's portrait, but I should like to pay a tribute to Stephen Haggard's presentment of him on the first night of Gordon Daviot's play *The Laughing Woman*. In everything but actual physiognomy—in charm and gaiety and vitality and agility and perversity and violence, and in the unmistakable air of genius, those who saw Stephen Haggard on that evening saw Henri as I knew him.

A few years ago I had occasion to read the lease of my rooms in Raymond Buildings, the terms of which had escaped my memory; and I found with consternation that I had sworn by all my gods never to put nails in the wood-work; 'instead of which,' as the magistrate said, I have put nails not only in every wall but also in all the doors, none of which can be opened or shut without an infant earthquake.

I hope this confession will not meet the eyes of the authorities of Gray's Inn, or that if it does, they will 'pass and look aside.' I have got from time to time a good deal of kudos for 'generosity' in lending to exhibitions, and I never disclaim it; but the truth is that I am like the Old Woman who lived in a Shoe—I have so many pictures that unless at least twenty are boarded-out, I don't know what to do. When I lent my collection in its entirety to Whitechapel, I was amazed to find the contents of my little bandbox covering the walls of a huge gallery of which, when I stood at the one end, I could barely see the other.

The whole was nearly wiped out in the War, for on two nights a bomb fell within a few yards of me, one to the left, and one to the right. On the first occasion I came carefree home from dinner, to find all the inhabitants of Raymond Buildings wringing their hands on the pavement like Lance Gobbo's cat, and I flew up three flights of stairs expecting to find 'havock and spoil and ruin' at the top; but all was calm peace, except for one poor little picture that had been transfixcd by a splinter of shrapnel. As it wasn't a specially good painting, I have kept it in that condition ever since as a *monument historique*.

Eighteen months before I 'retired,' I made what I meant as a final census. It was time to close my collection, for I had already not an inch more room, and very soon I should have not a penny more 'margin.' If I had had room and no money, or money and no room, I should have been wretched; but the coincidence of the two considerations made the necessity more tolerable—it was evidently 'meant' that I should buy no more. The reckoning was then about 150 paintings (to say nothing of at least double that number of drawings) by 86 different hands; and by now (for of course I couldn't keep strictly to my self-denying ordinance) both these figures have grown a little. Everybody rightly skips Catalogues, from Homer's downwards, and to pick out a few names would be invidious; but I can't refrain from pluming

myself on Wilson Steer's exquisite *Poole Harbour*, and my two splendid Sickerts, the *New Bedford*, one of the masterpieces of his earlier period, and the more recent *Her Majesty's*, a heavenly vision of azure and white and honey-colour, which is to me the loveliest of the discoveries made by that wonderful veteran on the new leaf which he turned-over a few years ago. (It is a weakness of mine, I hope an amiable one, to think my specimens the best of their makers' handiwork.)

Of the third *doyen*, Augustus John, I have alas nothing but three drawings, for he has always been beyond my means. This leads me to recount my three worst failures to put salt on the tail of Opportunity, partly in order to move the sympathy of kind-hearted fellow-collectors, and partly to give the other sort an occasion for *Schadenfreude*. Visiting the Warren Gallery, I saw a beautiful portrait by John of one of his boys, and more in curiosity than in hopefulness asked the price: it was £100, and I went sadly away, for I had no great possessions. But the picture grew on my mind's eye, and a week later I rang Miss Warren up to ask if I might have it for £50 down, and the rest by the end of the year—only to be told that in the meantime it had gone up to £300: John had visited the gallery, and had been indignant to hear how low she had priced it. I have kicked myself ever since for not having been more Napoleonic at the first time of asking.

Ages before this, I went with Neville Lytton to the Carfax Gallery, and we both fell flat before Blake's little *Bathsheba*, which I found I could have for the same fatal figure of £100. It so happened, most unusually, that I had that sum to spare, but it was 'a lot of money,' and the moment didn't spur me quite hard enough—I was off to Paris at cockcrow next morning, so I left Neville with a power-of-attorney. When I came back a week later the picture had been sold, but not to me—Neville had decided that it was in bad condition, and would probably soon be resolved into its elements. It is now one of the glories of the Tate, and not a bit the worse for the wear of the years between.

Some ten years later I saw at Christie's an extremely attractive *Street in Dieppe* by Walter Sickert, now also a glory of the Tate, and like an idiot I decided to bid for it myself instead of giving a commission to the Carfax people, who were my usual allies. There were two other bidders, one of whom dropt out at £14; and I drove the second up to £35 before dropping out myself. I found next day that he *was* Carfax, so that if I hadn't been so inopportunately independent the prize must have been knocked down to me for £15. But I can't grumble, for on the whole I have had far more good luck than bad.

I hope my Propaganda has been discreet, but at the end of the chapter the Nymph must come forward with a final bow *to point the moral, which is that a man who never in all his life has anything that could possibly be called Money may in the course of years get together a collection which is a continual joy in the making, and in the end a source of pride and enduring content.*

## CHAPTER XVI

### THEATRE

Discrimination—Arnold Bennett—Ivor Novello—Noel Coward—Christopher Hassall.

ABOUT five years ago I was driven by avarice to write for *Harper's Bazaar* a few articles on the Stage, in which I led off with a couple of paragraphs that were intended as at once an apology and a justification for my attitude towards the Theatre of Commerce; and I may as well give them here, to put myself straight with the reader.

'I have always shrunk,' I said, 'from writing publicly about the theatre, partly from a disinclination to spread in wider circles the contempt in which my judgement is commonly held by my friends. I am so easily pleased, they tell me, that my praise is hardly worth having. Of course I don't admit this myself. My argument is that if I lay out on a play 12s. 6d. of a shrinking income and a whole evening of the brief life which is my daily-lessening portion, I may just as well enjoy it if I can; but this does not mean that I lose all sense of proportion, or of discrimination between the good and the less good—though it is perfectly true that in choosing between what someone wittily distinguished as good bad plays and bad good ones, my preference is decidedly for the former.

'The noblest critic is undoubtedly he who judges a performance as a whole, and insists on the highest standard both for the play and for the acting; but there is room also, in this world of imperfection, for one who condones faults for the sake of beauties, and can be happy with first-rate acting in a second-rate play; and anyhow he is preferable to those whose evening is spoilt if they cannot find a pretext for not

enjoying it, and who fasten on some small blemish to condemn a whole production. La Fontaine wrote a fable *Contre ceux qui ont le goût difficile*. I am not among them; and it is only fair to warn anyone who reads me that I am one of those who look on the bright side.'

My system is to go along with the author as far as I possibly can, clinging-on if only to his little finger when he takes some yawning crevasse: sometimes he falls in, and then it is both our funerals. Those critics who quite naturally always want to shatter a play to bits and remould it nearer to their heart's desire remind me of the dialogue in *Pride and Prejudice* between Miss Bingley and her brother about the prospective ball at Netherfield. 'It would surely be much more rational if conversation instead of dancing made the order of the day.' 'Much more rational, my dear Caroline, I dare say; but it would not be near so much like a ball.'

To this day I enjoy the play like a child, and show it; which makes me popular with the players, but gets me into trouble with the critics. One evening the curtain hadn't been up five minutes when Hubert Griffith turned round and handed me a scrap of his programme on which he had scribbled: 'You are *bon public*.' I took this as a compliment, and retailed it to Ivor Novello. 'Yes,' said Ivor, scraping the gilt from the gingerbread, 'he said so to me; but he went on: "It's a pity he's so uncritical." ' Another time the play had only just begun when I felt a touch on my shoulder, and James Agate whispered: 'You *can't* be enjoying it *yet*.' And here I must be allowed to lift an anecdote from Jim Agate's *Ego*. Arnold Bennett was running down a new play, and Jim rashly said: 'Eddie Marsh enjoyed it.' 'Hang Eddie Marsh,' replied A.B., 'he's a miserable fellow—he enjoys everything.\* I should rather like to have that on my tombstone.

\* In this I am pleased to learn that I resemble Lord Melbourne. "Lord Melbourne looked as if he enjoyed himself," said a surprised observer who had watched him beaming at some tedious city banquet. "There is nothing Lord Melbourne does not enjoy," was the reply.'—Lord David Cecil, *The Young Melbourne*.



(I had in person two little entr'acte clashes with Arnold Bennett. One was at the Little Theatre, where Valerie Taylor was playing Nina and John Gielgud Constantine in *The Seagull*. It was the first time I had seen a play by Tchekov properly given, and I entered a new world of enchantment. After the first act, in an evil moment, I caught sight of A.B. and rushed across to him. 'For once,' I cried, 'we shall agree—isn't this *heaven*?' He shook his finger at me. 'Edward, Edward,' he stuttered, 'you get so . . . *carried away*—it's a . . . *shocking* production!' I slunk back to my seat, the spell broken for good and all. The other occasion was the first night of *Polly*, the sequel to the *Beggar's Opera*, in which A.B. had what is known as 'an interest.' For some reason I was in an unusually receptive mood, even for me: the music seemed ravishing, and Lilian Davies Venus and Euphrosyne and Euterpe in one. A.B. was looking on from a box with the managerial eye. After the second act he sought me out and said: 'I wish you wouldn't lead the encores—you're making it much too long.' I took this in mingled dudgeon and surprise. For one thing, it seemed ungracious in him to damp a supporter; and for another, it was surely absurd to suppose that a single person could be making all that difference—anyhow, I decided not to stir a finger in the last act; and there wasn't a single encore! Is not this a valid though tiny contribution to the study of Mass-Psychology?)

I would not have it thought that I am incapable of misery before the footlights. Like Tennyson's Ulysses, 'all times I have enjoyed greatly, have suffered greatly;' and on one of the suffering nights, when Charles Morgan told me he wondered I didn't take advantage of my amateur status to go home, I very nearly did. But taking it by and large, I must admit that inside the theatre I have more in common with Tom Dick and Harry than with the Élite.

It was not always so. There was a time when I was as exclusive as anybody, and only felt in my element with the





*L. Harris*  
1976

IVOR NOVELLO

*From a photograph by Claude Harris*

French plays, Ibsen, Shakespeare, Hauptmann, and Barker-Vedrenne. Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones were all very well in their way, but to visit their plays, though pleasant enough, was a concession. The change in me was brought about by the greatest friendship I have ever had in the theatre.

One day in December 1915 Viola Tree was taking me to His Majesty's for *Mavourneen*, in which Lily Elsie played Nell Gwynn; but in the morning she sent me my ticket, 'as we shouldn't be sitting together.' I meekly went to the theatre, and from my lonely stall beheld my hostess, with a remarkably good-looking young man, in the stage-box, to which after the first act she beckoned me. 'Do you know Ivor Novello?' she said. 'He wrote *Keep the Home Fires Burning*.' I looked blank. '*You* know,' she went on—'Tum-ty-tum-tum tum-tum.' At this light dawned, for it was the only tune I had heard for months; but I had never learnt its name. The young man had looked a little taken aback, as well he might; but he pulled himself together and asked me what I thought of Lily Elsie. This changed the luck, for I went into the sincerest of ecstasies; warmth stole into the atmosphere, and on a private nod and wink from Ivor, which didn't escape me, Viola invited me to sit in the box for the rest of the play. She told me afterwards that Ivor had said he couldn't possibly expose himself to the risk of sitting with somebody who might conceivably be lukewarm about Elsie, who was his goddess; and she had bent to his will. I suppose I ought to have been offended, but having seen Ivor, I couldn't blame her.

I should have been immensely surprised to be told beforehand that my next great and, so to speak, 'influencing' friend would be a composer of popular music, half my own age; but so it was. As usual, I was borne away on the new current, all my high-brow notions 'tost and fluttered into rags, the sport of winds;' and soon I was as much worked-up about the musical comedies at the Gaiety as ever I had been

about the Stage Society. (This was a good thing on the whole, for I had been so long subjected to rarefying influences that it was just as well to come for once under a broadening one.) I soon became, what I have been ever since, a 'first-nighter.' I was also made free of a novel and most attractive world of acquaintanceship. Till then, the only actors and actresses I had known at all intimately were Mrs. Patrick Campbell, Harry Ainley, Cathleen Nesbitt and Viola Tree; but now they crowded in on me—many who were already on the heights, and many who have climbed there since. (I can boast that I remember the time when if Noel Coward presented himself at a box-office and shyly asked for a free seat at a matinée, it was quite on the cards that he would be sent empty away.) I became so adept in theatrical 'shop' that Douglas Murray, author of *The Man From Toronto*, in whose company I was staying with the Ainleys at Seal Chart, took it for granted I was an actor, and told me with some embarrassment that he must make a confession: he had never heard of me—where had I appeared? On my disclaimer, he was good enough to say it was a pity: the stage could do with a man like me.

Soon after Ivor and I had made friends, Lady Randolph Churchill asked us both to luncheon, and Ivor—very spruce and taking in his smart new Air-Force uniform—met Winston for the first time. Winston was interested in seeing the composer of the *Home Fires*, which had by then taken rank as a national asset; and they were soon talking briskly across the table, exchanging the titles of music-hall songs, of which Winston had a great repertory dating from his Sandhurst days. Few boys of twenty-two would have heard of them, but Ivor was a specialist, and was only once at fault. 'Do you know,' said Winston, suddenly, 'you ought to be in a home.' Ivor was confounded, and so was I: what could he have said to call his sanity in question? but we realized next moment that *You ought to be in a Home* was one of the old songs.

In many ways Ivor was then very much what he is now, but there was one difference, which may be of interest to students of Career—he was infernally lazy, and never did a hand's turn till the day or two before a 'number' had to be sent in, when he would shut himself up with his piano and work round the clock with feverish nerve-racked white-lipped energy till it was done. Now, he hardly knows how to take a holiday (though I believe he thoroughly enjoyed a Mediterranean cruise of which he gave a good résumé on his return: 'I saw all the most famous ruins of Greece, Egypt and Palestine, and finished up in Paris with Cécile Sorel, Mary Garden, and Mistinguette'). I think the change in him dated from his contact with the drive and thorough professional spirit of Constance Collier, when he worked with her on his first success as a playwright, *The Rat*.

I was with him for that triumphant *première* at Brighton, and also on a very different occasion, the crashing downfall of Noel Coward's *Sirocco*, in which he played the lead. Noel has related that catastrophe in *Present Indicative*, and I will only add that I supped with them both that night at Ivor's flat, and have seldom been more impressed than by the dispassionate courage, free from all trace of self-pity, with which the two routed aspirants, neither of whom would have been surprised to be told that he was irreparably done-for, discussed the failure and its causes.

One quality in Ivor which has never changed, or has, if anything, grown with the years, is the modesty and simplicity and 'naturalness' of his bearing. He might well have had his head turned, but this has never happened, because he has always had the trick of laughing at himself. Someone who had seen *Glamorous Night*, in which he was leading man as well as author and composer, asked him why he hadn't given himself a song or two into the bargain. 'Because,' he answered, 'I would rather people said Why doesn't he sing? than Why *does* he sing?' Someone who had watched him at the stage-door signing programmes

in the vortex of a seething mob, told him it was lucky he had a sense of humour, otherwise he could never bear it. 'Wait,' he said, 'till I *don't* get the crowds; it's then I shall want my sense of humour.'

It would be impossible to write about him without a word of his considerate kindness to his companions and workers. He has been known to overload a play by putting in a superfluous part so as to give a job to some faithful old ally who was in need of it; and more than once I have sat in his dressing-room on the last night of a tour, when actor after actor has come in to say good-bye, and told him with evident feeling that never in his life has he had such a happy spell of work.

As dramatist, I said my say about him in an introduction to a volume of his plays published in 1932, from which I will only reproduce the rather sententious peroration: 'If he will give himself his due, and put his main reliance on those among his many gifts which distinguish the dramatist from the entertainer, he will surely win a high place in the theatre of his time, and perhaps write a play which will survive it.' I still live in hopes.

It is pleasant to think that I owe to Ivor the next main landmark in my tale of friendships, Christopher Hassall. I had seen and marked him as Romeo, with Peggy Ashcroft as his Juliet, in the O.U.D.S. production of the play which John Gielgud brought to London for a Sunday performance; but our first meeting was at Oxford, early in 1934, when he was touring with Ivor in *Proscenium*. We three had supper together at the Clarendon, and four days later, the tour being over, Christopher dined with me at Raymond Buildings, and showed me *The Arrow* and others of his poems (since published in *Poems of Two Years*), by which, as I find I wrote in my diary, I was 'quite bowled over.' Since then his progress in poetry has become the chief interest of my declining years.



CHRISTOPHER HASSALL

*From a miniature by Enid Mountfort*





For reasons which will have sufficiently appeared, I do not propose to make any generalizations about the Drama: I have not the mental retina which keeps sharp-edged and communicable impressions of past performances; and theatrical anecdotes have a bad name for evaporating. I will therefore close this chapter here, but its comparative brevity is no measure of my thankfulness to the Muses Melpomene and Thalia for one of my keenest and most enduring pleasures.

## CHAPTER XVII

### TWEEDLEDUM

*'All of these have got to go in somewhere.'*—TWEEDLEDUM  
*Through the Looking-Glass*

Un-staircase Wit—Misunderstandings—Pearls or Chestnuts?  
—Crude Blooms—Games—Dreams.

SOME people have a strong dislike of anecdotes. I am very fond of them myself, and this book is largely made-up of them; but so far I have tried to conciliate prejudice by giving them some show of relevance to the matter in hand. In this chapter I must throw away all pretence of continuity or apropos, and string together as best I may 'a number of things' that have stuck in my memory, in the hope that others may find some of them as amusing as I do. As a precedent, I can plead the *Detached Thoughts* which Byron jotted down at Ravenna.

### UN-STAIRCASE WIT

There is great joy over a 'good thing' which is not an afterthought, but said on the spur of the right moment. I was staying at Cannes with Winston, and we met Lord French at luncheon with an old friend of his who, I noticed, called him Peter. That evening Winston and I dined at the Casino with the Duke of Westminster, and I asked if Peter was a nickname in general use, or special to this lady. The Duke answered on the tick: 'I expect he had denied her thrice.' At this time I was Private Secretary to the Duke of Devonshire, and when I

got back to London I told the story to his sister-in-law Lady Moyra Cavendish, who said she was sure I had made it up myself, as propaganda for Dukes.

My next specimen is of less exalted origin. A Treasure-hunt was got up for the children at Clovelly Court, and one of the clues was 'Washing in theory but not in practice,' meaning a bathroom which was for the moment out of order. A puzzled little girl showed it to Mrs. Hamlyn's butler: 'Oh, Mr. Pinnock,' she said, 'what *can* this mean?' and Mr. Pinnock rapped out: 'Footman's neck.'

Every anthologist has licence to include at least one specimen of his own work in his selection, and I will here avail myself of this privilege. I went for a country walk with old Lord Sanderson, the permanent head of the Foreign Office, nicknamed 'Lamps' after the thick round goggly pebble-spectacles from the depths of which blue pin-point eyes shot their penetrating ray. He told me of an Admiral who went to the levée on a Collar Day wearing his G.C.M.G. much too far down in front; and King Edward said to him: 'You seem to forget, Admiral, that the G.C.M.G. is not a *navel* decoration.' 'You may depend upon it,' Lord Sanderson went on, 'that next Collar Day I was careful not to make the same mistake—indeed, I expect I went too far in the other direction.' 'And did King Edward say to you,' I asked: '“You seem to forget, Lord Sanderson, that the G.C.M.G. is not a fundamental distinction?”'

Mrs. Robert Crawshay was one of the wits, and I remember a quick reply of hers at luncheon with Katherine Lady Cromer. Maurice Baring had taken to painting water-colours, which were very dreamy and romantic in their general effect, but a little on the messy side. Lady Cromer, who had heard of these productions, asked what they were like. Mrs. Crawshay looked up at the ceiling like a bird, and answered: 'Penny-Whistlers.'

She told me she had been staying at a country house where

there was a fine collection of paintings, and among the guests were George Moore and Bernhard Berenson. In the afternoon, as she was making the tour of the house by herself, George Moore came along and asked what she was doing. 'I'm looking at this beautiful picture.' 'Picture? I see no picture. I see a quantity of pigment, distributed on canvas, and surrounded by a frame—but a picture? No, dear lady—not a picture.' A little later Berenson appeared, and asked her the same question. 'I'm admiring this Rembrandt.' 'Ah, yes! You're quite right to admire it—but Rembrandt? No, dear lady, it isn't a Rembrandt—it's an early Kate Greenaway.' (I put in 'dear lady' in deference to the traditional belief that intellectuals always use this expression in addressing *les femmes du monde*; though whether George Moore and Berenson actually did so, I cannot say.)

Lord Marcus Beresford went to the play, and was asked by the attendant if she should take his coat. 'No thank you,' he said. 'Shall I take your apron?'

At the time when the Chain Pier had just been built, and was the talk and pride of Brighton, Lord Marcus was about to enter the Enclosure at the Races when he met a prominent race-goer, Mrs. Chainé by name, in a high state of indignation because having left her ticket at home she had been refused admission. 'I'll soon put that right,' said Lord Marcus; and then, to the man at the gate, 'What's this I hear, that you won't let this lady in? Don't you know who she is? She's the widow of the man who built the Chain Pier.'

Nobody said better things than Lady Tree. Was there ever anything more charming than her answer to someone who told her how nicely she had done her hair? 'How sweet of you to call it *my* hair!' She was very fond of Bridge, but knew that she didn't play very well; and once when her hand had been so good that nobody on earth could have made less than twelve tricks, she contemplated them with awe. 'Little

Slam,' she mused, 'who made thee?' To a waiter in a Soho restaurant who offered her an unattractive fish-salad, she said reproachfully: 'Thou canst not serve cod and salmon.'

In an appeal for some musical charity: 'Our sweetest songs,' she said, 'are those that tell of saddest thought—but let us not shilly-shally with Shelley.'

'What would Christ do if he came to Chicago?' Such was the question which was burning in the newspapers when she arrived there. She was at once asked for her view, and she gave it: 'He would say, Put me back on my nice comfortable cross.'

Her daughter Viola\* had, I was going to say, inherited her mantle—but her mantle was her own. She had a tinder-box imagination, and what Miss Austen's Frank Churchill called 'the art of giving pictures in a few words.' I remember an evening when someone was expatiating on the Economy of Nature, who according to the speaker never made a mistake. 'Oh darling,' she cried, '*too* many fish!'

At the time when she was training for a prima donna, she wrote in a moment of despondency that looking into the future she could foresee no fruits of her career but a laurel lyre as tall as herself, covered with dust, and ticketed *Hommage de Valparaiso*.

I wish I could remember more of Mrs. Patrick Campbell's flashes. She has my favourite art of manipulating proverbs, and when I told her I had heard that a detrimental acquaintance of ours had turned over a new leaf, she said ominously: 'Ah, but leaves blow back.' Her neighbour at a dinner-party held forth at greater length than she approved, and when she could bear it no longer she suddenly said: 'Phüitt!'

\* Viola died while this book was preparing for the printer. I would have tried to write of her more worthily, but

'this grave is all too young as yet  
To have outgrown the sorrow . . .'

On demeura surpris;  
Cela suspendit les esprits.

‘What do you mean by Phüitt?’ he asked. ‘That’s the word in edgeways.’

Ivor Novello in his early days had a great success with her. I think it was the first time they had met, and he had the impudence to mimic her to her face. When she told him she didn’t talk like that, he said: ‘You’re *dooing* it *nauwh*.’ She adored him for it.

Lord Birkenhead brought home the news of a lucrative contract for a series of articles to be called *Milestones of my Life*. His family asked him what incidents he proposed to use, and when he told them Lady Birkenhead said: ‘You might have put in your marriage,’ and Lady Eleanor Smith added ‘and the birth of your first child.’ F.E. answered: ‘I said *Milestones* my dears, not *Millstones*.’

The men had left the table after a dinner in Grosvenor Street, and I was making my way down a long passage, when I met the Ambassador of a friendly Power, and heard behind him a rushing sound of mighty waters. ‘Après moi le déluge,’ he said as he passed.

Mr. Appleton was a famous American wit. There was a spot in the centre of New York where cross-roads met, making a happy hunting-ground for the four winds of heaven; and how to deal with it was the question of the hour. Mr. Appleton’s advice was that a shorn lamb should be tethered in the middle. Someone asked him if he was going to So-and-so’s funeral, and he answered: ‘No, but I approve of it.’ It was not he, but another American with the same turn of mind, who when he was asked: ‘Has your wife been entertaining this season?’ answered: ‘Not very.’ And it was yet another American, this time

a millionaire, who got a letter from a gangster threatening to kidnap his wife unless he sent him 'fifty grand' by return. 'I haven't got fifty grand,' he replied, 'but I'm interested in your proposition.'

I don't often tell a sporting story, but here is one of a Lord Ailesbury in the last century, who was a rather careless shot. 'Damn it, sir,' said the gun next him, 'do you know what you've done? You've shot me in the head.' 'Have I by Jove?' said Lord Ailesbury. 'Then why the bloody Hell don't you tower?'

A glorious pun was made when the Basque children who had taken refuge in England were crowding out through a narrow door in a building where they had been assembled, and someone shouted: 'Don't put all your Basques in one exit.'

#### MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Walter (alias Dickie) Hudd was starting on a South African tour. On his last evening we went to a musical play at the Hippodrome; and if this anecdote is to have any point the reader must be good enough to assume that I was in the vein. Between the acts I made my best joke so far, and 'waited for the laugh,' instead of which he merely asked if I had a Boswell. I was piqued. 'Well, really!' I thought, 'here am I saying things that would split the sides of a cat, and all Dickie can do is to cadge a book for the ship.' Then out loud, rather tartly: 'Yes—two or three.' From his answer I realized the claim I had made: that not one only, but several of my fellow-creatures were devoting their lives to taking notes of my conversation.

At the height of the crossword rage, a whole luncheon-party gave itself up to the puzzle in the *Daily Telegraph*. One of the lights, which had six letters and was known to begin



with M, was 'Something to do with pirates;' and an American lady suggested, as I thought, *Moidore*. This certainly had to do with pirates, but I objected that it had seven letters. 'No it hasn't.' 'How do you spell it?' 'M, u, r, d, e, r—how do you?' I had nothing to say. (This was the lady who asked Evan Charteris 'if he had seen this play *Chen Chee*.' Evan asked her if she meant *Chu Chin Chow*. She didn't; she meant Shelley's *The Cenci*. It was a compatriot of hers who said she didn't think she would care about *The Wreck of the Oedeyepus*, but she was looking forward to *Gallstones* by Milesworthy.)

Lady Arthur Russell met an Irishman who spoke of his brother Charlus. 'What did you say your brother's name was?' she asked. 'Charlus.' 'What a curious name!' 'It's one of the commonest names there are.' 'I assure you I never heard of it.' 'You must have.' 'How do you spell it?' 'C, h, a, r, l, e, s. You *must* have heard of it.' Lady Arthur could only admit that now she came to think of it, she had.

General Sir Neville Chamberlain, when he was commanding the troops in Dublin, received a morning visit from the French Consul, who began by saying that he was sorry to cockroach on his time. 'Cockroach?' said Sir Neville—'Oh, do you mean *encroach*?' '*Encroach*?' said the Frenchman, 'ah oui! Je croyais que c'était masculin.' This reminds me of Lady Anne Blunt, who said to her governess: 'What a lot of black-beetles!' 'You shouldn't call them black-beetles,' said the governess. 'If you look at them you will see that they are neither black nor beetles. They are cockroaches.' 'Well,' said little Lady Anne, 'they are certainly neither cocks nor roaches.'

An old lady in the Welsh mountains, who was a wireless-addict, said: 'I have no doubt Queen Mary is an excellent woman; but I can't say I hold with this habit she has of going backwards and forwards to America.'

I will not name the heroine of my next three anecdotes, who is as famous for her vagueness as for her beauty and her charm. One of her sisters had heard that she knew of a peculiarly excellent kind of milk for children, and wrote to ask what it was called. She telegraphed back: 'Grey Day;' the sister wrote this on a piece of paper and sent round for some to the milkshop, where it had never been heard of. (Perhaps Posterity will thank me for explaining that it was really 'Grade A'.)

When Charles Whibley was about to marry Sir Walter Raleigh's daughter, this lady met Duff Cooper at dinner and asked him what he thought of the engagement. 'What engagement?' 'Oh, you know—what is his name? That old writer we're all so fond of.' 'You don't mean Mr. Birrell?' 'Yes, of course, that's who it is.' 'Well I never! and who is he going to marry?' 'The daughter of that Professor at Oxford, a great friend of all of ours—you know——' 'What, Gilbert Murray?' 'Yes, of course, that's it.' Duff was a good deal surprised, but she was finally so positive about it that when later in the evening he went to the Garrick Club and met Alan Parsons, who was just commencing gossip-writer on the *Daily Sketch* and going about like a thirsty dog with his tongue hanging out for items, he presented him with this tit-bit. Next morning Mr. Birrell was beginning to shave, when he became conscious of something unusual in the street under his window, and looking out saw the pavement of Elm Park Gardens black with reporters.

This same lady, on a voyage to South Africa, was looking over the rail of the ship at some marine birds, and asked an Australian who was standing by her what they were. 'Kypens,' he said, or seemed to say. She made a mental note of the name; and next morning, looking over the same rail, but this time with an Englishman at her side, she called his attention to the birds. 'Look at those Kypens,' she said. The Englishman, who knew them for Cape-hens, wondered where on earth his distinguished

fellow-countrywoman could possibly have picked up her accent.

Lady Middleton was my fellow-guest at a week-end visit, and at breakfast on the Sunday she asked me what I thought of the title of her husband's new book. I asked what it was, and I certainly ought not to have believed my ears when they heard her say *Ireland, You Poor Heroine!*; but I did, and making some non-committal reply (she told me later that I hadn't turned a hair) went off to read the *Sunday Times*, where I found the book announced as *Ireland, Dupe or Heroine?*

MR. C. C. BOWLING PUNISHED—these words caught my eye on the poster of an evening paper. Wondering vaguely who this poor Mr. Bowling was and what he could have done, I walked on till I saw on another poster MR. C. C. BOWLING FLOGGED. This seemed serious, and I was putting my hand in my pocket for a penny when I realized it was the bowling of the Marylebone Cricket Club that had been visited with retribution.

When Prunier's restaurant was opened in St. James's Street, the occasion was marked by the usual 'do,' and a lady arrived at precisely six o'clock on a scene of feverish finishing-touches. She apologized for having come too early: 'But,' she said, 'you did say six o'clock to the minute.' 'Did we?' said the host. She produced her invitation, and pointed to the words *de six heures à minute*.

Winston, at an Enchantress picnic in Vallona Bay, took it into his head to recite Gray's *Ode to Spring*. When he came to

Brush'd by the hand of rough Mischance,  
Or chill'd by Age, their airy dance  
They leave, in dust to rest,

the First Lieutenant was puzzled. 'What was that,' he

asked, 'about their arid aunts?' It seemed an excellent rule of family life, to leave one's arid aunts in dust to rest.

A female murderess, found after her trial to be insane, was told that the death-sentence had been commuted, and she was to be sent to Broadmoor for the King's pleasure. 'Well, well,' she answered, 'I should have thought I was too old for that kind of thing; but one lives and learns.'

A new partner in a well-known firm of picture-dealers was asked if he had a Renoir. 'No,' he said, 'I've only got a small Cadillac.'

At the first concert of the Chamber Music Society at Wimborne House, I followed the performance of a Beethoven quartette in a little bound volume of miniature scores which had been my companion for forty years; and this proceeding aroused unfavourable comment. 'I do think,' somebody was heard to say, 'that Eddie Marsh need not have read a book the whole time.'

Soon after I had been made a K.C.V.O., Lady Leslie asked me across the table at luncheon what difference I found it made being a Knight. This was rather a difficult question. I squared my shoulders, and said I hoped it had given me more presence. 'More presents?' exclaimed Lady Ribblesdale, who was sitting next me: 'What a very sordid point of view!'

David Cecil went to Germany to learn the language, and engaged an agreeable Fräulein as his instructress. After missing several lessons, he wrote to explain that he had been in bed for a week with flu. The Fräulein was interested. 'Of course,' she answered, 'I knew *Flo* as a name, but this is the first I've heard of *Flu*.'

When King Amanullah paid his State visit to Buckingham Palace, Lady Cromer, the wife of the Lord Chamberlain, was taken in to dinner by one of the Afghan Ministers, who spoke excellent English; and as the procession passed through the Picture Gallery he waved his left hand at the walls. 'All these pictures,' he said, 'are worthless—absolutely *worthless!*' How was he to know that 'priceless' meant one thing, and 'worthless' the exact opposite?

At a Celebrity Party in New York, Victor Lytton was introduced to Jim Mollison, who had recently been married to Amy Johnson, and mentioned that he was about to visit Florida. 'Then you'll be seeing Miami,' said Mollison, rhyming the name with 'When will you pay me?' 'Oh, is she there?' Victor answered, 'I want so much to meet her.' 'Is who where?' said Mollison; and so it went on.

## PEARLS OR CHESTNUTS

I was brought up on a few historical anecdotes which I have never seen in print, and which no one I tell them to has heard of. They seem to me worth recording, so I will run the risk of their being in every book except those I have read, and old knowledge to everyone except those to whom I have imparted them.

My mother held up to my childish emulation an act of the Duke of Wellington which sealed him as the greatest of gentlemen. In one of the Peninsular campaigns he billeted himself on an old peasant woman, who walked five miles each way to get him an egg for his breakfast. The egg was bad, but the Duke ate it. (I offered this to both Lord Esher and Philip Guedalla when they were writing their books about him, but neither of them used it—however, it bears the stamp of truth, and my mother's family were not likely to be wrong on such a point.)

My father was a friend of the publisher John Murray, who told him the story of the Byron Bible. The actual jest in which it culminates is a household word, but in all the masses of books I have read about Byron I have never found it in its setting. Byron had made the original John Murray a present of a handsome Bible magnificently bound in morocco, which was for years displayed with pride to visitors; but the time came when it was no longer shown, and it transpired that one of the family, turning over the leaves, had noticed an alteration in Byron's hand: 'Now Barabbas was a publisher ~~robber.~~'

There were two stories of Talleyrand, which I hope Duff Cooper left out of his book because he didn't know them, and not because they were too well-known.

When Napoleon forced him to make an honest woman of Mme. Grand, she had to take the head of the table at his dinner-parties, and one evening her neighbour asked her what was her country of origin. She answered: 'Je suis d'Inde, monsieur.' Talleyrand heard this from his end, and shot out: 'Je ne dis pas le contraire.'\*

A lady lost her husband, of whom she was reputed not to be very fond, and he contented himself with writing:

Madame,

Hélas!

Talleyrand-Périgord.

A few months later she got engaged to someone else, and he wrote:

Madame,

Holà!

Talleyrand-Périgord.

\* *Dinde* is the French for (1) a turkey-hen, (2) a goose.

The celebrated preacher Rowland Hill disliked a new fashion in coiffure which was called 'the Top-knot,' and told his friends he meant to preach against it next Sunday. 'On what text?' they asked. 'You'll see.' When he got into the pulpit he gave out: Matthew, XXIV.17:

'Top-knot, come down.'

(There was a later sermon-story of Canon Eyton, who was very much the fashion in the 'nineties. One Sunday morning he sensed that his audience at Holy Trinity, Sloane Street, was less attentive than usual, so he broke off, and said: 'Last week when I was at Sandringham . . .' A breathless silence ensued, and he resumed his address.)

The next is quite unworthy of me, but I fondly remember hearing it as a Westminster boy—and it is certainly funny—and nobody seems to know it now. It is the advertisement which was said to have inaugurated the famous business of Moss Bros: 'Mr. and Mrs. Moss, having left off clothing of every description, invite an early inspection.'

Here is a bit of schoolboy history which gets in a good deal: Queen Elizabeth was riding naked through the City of London when she met Sir Walter Raleigh, who gave her his cloak, saying: 'Thy need is greater than mine.' She answered: 'Dieu et mon droit,' which means 'By God you are right.'

#### CRUDE BLOOMS

An American lady Christmassing in Rome told her friends that she would have wished to mark the day by sending them presents of flowers, but she had been to every florist in the city and found 'nothing but crude blooms—not a bow or a bassket.' I have now come to the end of the ribbons with

which I have been tying my anecdotes into bunches, and the few which remain must be unclassified.

I was taken to tea with a very great Dignitary of the Church, who showed me his beautiful garden in the Ruth-Draper-conscious manner which so few garden-showers are now able to dispense with. I asked him the name of a plant. 'That,' he said, 'is *rosa mariteyema*—my gardener, poor fellow, insists on calling it *maritima*.' I knew in my bones that the i was short, but I said nothing, partly from unwillingness to 'do him wrong, being so majestic,' and partly because I remembered Oliver Cromwell's adjuration, by the bowels of the Lord, to believe it possible that one may be mistaken; but at the first opportunity I flew to the Latin Dictionary, and found, of course, that the gardener was right.

Lady Louisa Egerton, sister of the Victorian Duke of Devonshire, was one of the greatest of great ladies, and it was an honour for me to stay with her at Hardwick and St. George's Hill. She told me a charming story of Henry Greville, brother of the diarist Charles, and something of a lady-killer. Coming home with a friend after a dinner-party, he picked up a letter from the hall-table, read it with a chuckle, and put it in his pocket, saying merely: 'Naughty little Duchess!'

Geraldine Lady Bristol told me about a kinswoman of her husband's, Mrs. Hervey of Ickwell Bury, who had been a notorious boaster. One day she made friends at a neighbour's house with an archæologist, and told him that if he would come to see her she would show him her fine collection of Greek statues. He was rather surprised that there should be such a collection without his having heard of it, but soon afterwards he presented himself at Ickwell Bury, where she gave him tea, and talked delightfully on every subject but the statues. At length he asked if he might see them. 'Oh!'



she said airily—‘the Greek statues—yes—do you know, they’ve disappeared? We suspect the third housemaid.’

Which is the best, and which the worst, rhyme that has ever been made in English? These are questions of taste and opinion. For the best, I think my choice would be Thackeray’s

This is the Countess Guiccioli,  
Whom Byron saw habitually.

For the worst, I have a candidate which is hard to beat. It came in an owner-written epitaph on a pet dog, and was vouched for by the friend who passed it on to me:

Here little Fido lies at rest,  
The darling dog who loved us best.  
In his great heart was nothing mean;  
He *was* so like a human being.

One stanza of amateur verse has stuck in my memory since I was a schoolboy. A manuscript posted behind the glass of a curiosity-shop at Whitby drew my eye, and proved to report a dialogue between the writer and a believer in the Simple Life:

I pointed out the blessing  
That Civilation be:  
He wished he were a Heathen  
A-sitting by the sea.

A young friend of mine called Lance Page, who lived in a suburb and used to walk to his Office, noticed in the window of a curiosity-shop in the Fulham Road a little Dutch picture of an old lady, marked half-a-crown. As it took his fancy, he went in to buy it, but on feeling in his pocket found that he had come out without his money. ‘Never mind,’ he said, ‘I’ll fetch it to-morrow morning.’ Next day he presented himself with his half-

crown and asked for his picture. 'Here it is,' said the shopman, 'but it's three-and-six now.' 'Oh, really? Why?' 'Well, we took it out of the frame to give it a clean-up for you, and found it was by Rembrandt.'

I told this story to E. V. Lucas, who turned it into a whole page of *Punch*. Anyone who cares to see a *multum ex parvo* will find it under the title *The Just Appraisal* in his *Events and Embroideries*.

## GAMES

Oscar Wilde said that the only out-door<sup>g</sup> game he played was dominoes. I was a little better than that, for when Percy Grainger (famous among other things for his arrangement of the Londonderry Air) told me on a visit to the Edward Speyers that he played lawn-tennis 'passionately but badly,' I was able to recognize in him a kindred spirit, and we spent a delightful Sunday morning in a passionately-bad but hotly-contested single, beautified by the coruscation of his billowy and flaming hair as he dashed about the court. I am very proud of my friendship with Bunny Austin, but I have never attempted to play tennis with him.

I have had few greater humiliations than a game into which I was commandeered to make a four for Arthur Balfour. It was my *début* of the year, and I performed, as I knew I should, like a new-born kitten; but I improved as I went on, and towards the end of the set I heard Mr. Balfour say to his partner: 'You can see he has played before.' Yet there have been joyful moments when I have felt justified in making a quotation from Browning:

What plaudits from the next world after this,  
Couldst thou repeat a stroke, and gain the sky!

One fine winter morning at Hartham I was reading by the fire when Sir Algernon West, a most distinguished old gentleman who had been Private Secretary to Mr. Gladstone,

passed me on his way to the front door with his bundle of clubs. 'Don't you play golf?' he asked. 'I'm afraid I don't.' 'Oh you foolish young man, you don't know what a wretched old age you are preparing for yourself. Look at me going out into the fresh air for a glorious game, while you sit fugging over a book.' I spent the next three hours in rueful resolutions; but at one o'clock back came Sir Algy, groaning and cursing: 'Oh, what a miserable morning—couldn't hit a ball—why did I ever take up this infernal game?' So I said to myself: 'As you were.' However, I did try my hand later on; but though I was never quite on a par with Alan Milne's hero who 'sliced his first drive into the tee-box and got out with a niblick in four,' I became discouraged, and gave it up.

## DREAMS

Other people's dreams are a notorious bore; but Robert Louis Stevenson's *Chapter on Dreams*, with his convincing theory of 'the Brownies,' proves that there are exceptions to the rule, and I will venture a few of my own, in hopes they may be admitted into that class. The theory is that 'the little people who manage man's internal theatre'—we should now call them his subconscious—often amuse their master and themselves by devising dreams that are found in retrospect to have been all the time leading up to a *dénouement* which the dreamer couldn't possibly foresee.

In my waking life, I have never succeeded in finding any trace of a subconscious. I should not wish to be so far out of the fashion as not to have one at all, but these dreams are my only credential. Apart from their slightness—all but one are the merest jocosities—the difference between them and Stevenson's is that while his are very full and circumstantial, mine are cut down to the barest data which are necessary to make the point. My best, in which my naughty Brownies contrived a unique compendium of blasphemy, *lèse-majesté*,

and obscenity, is not for the public eye. So I will begin with one which was no worse than an impertinence. The scene was the Private Secretary's room at the Colonial Office, the other character a new and rather raw young colleague; and all that need else be known is that an eminent friend of mine, whom I will call Lord Jasper Palgrave, had just been raised to the peerage as, shall I say, Lord Saxmundham. The telephone on my table rang while I was at the other end of the room, so the novice answered it, and held the line to ask me: 'What are you doing to-night?' I told him I was dining with the bloody Jasper Palgraves. Judge of my consternation when I heard him repeat: 'He says he's dining with the bloody Jasper Palgraves,' and ring off. 'Good God!' I said, 'who was that?' 'Lady Saxmundham.' What proves that the Brownies were at work is that my epithet had no more relation to my feeling towards my hosts, to whom I was devoted, than it had to my normal mode of speech—the little monkeys saw their chance in the change of name, and took it.

I related this dream to Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, and she capped it with another she had just had herself, in which the hand of the Brownies was plain to see. She was alone in her drawing-room, when the butler opened the door and announced Sir Gerald du Maurier, with whom she had only a slight acquaintance. Pleased with the compliment of his visit, she was still more so when he began to talk with all the ease and elegance of the opening dialogue in one of the plays he was then presenting at Wyndham's Theatre. After a while, the conversation took a warmer tinge, and she was just beginning to bask once more in the old forgotten titillating sensation which after years of absorption in nannies and nurseries she thought she had for ever left behind, of being made-up-to by a new young man, when the door opened again and in walked her husband Bongie, followed by Sir Arbuthnot Lane and a little man with a little black bag whom she divined as an anæsthetist. 'Violet,' said Bongie,

'I'm glad to tell you that Cressida has had her tonsils out, and is going on perfectly well.' He then went to the writing-table and wrote out a cheque, which he handed to Sir Gerald, who took his departure with a low bow; and she realized that her husband in his tender conjugal solicitude had engaged the most fascinating actor in London to occupy her attention and shield her from the least breath of anxiety while her little daughter was undergoing an operation.

I was driving to a theatre with my actor friend Bobbie Andrews, to see a play by Strindberg, for which we both had a deep admiration. 'I do hope,' I said, 'they won't laugh in the third act.' 'Oh I do hope they won't,' said Bobbie. The next thing I knew, we were watching this very third act, which presented a nerve-racking, typically Strindbergian set-to between the hero and his wife. The climax approached—'ssh,' said the audience, on hearing a pin drop—and the husband, seizing from a bowl on the table a large potato-in-its-jacket, hurled it with all his might bang in the lady's face. Our worst fears came true. Pit box and gallery went up in one huge blare of laughter, Bobbie and I among the best; and when I woke I couldn't stop laughing for several minutes. The point is that though we felt beforehand as if we knew the play, the Brownies had told me nothing whatever about it except that there was a danger-spot in the third act. (Perhaps they were incidentally having a mild dig at Strindberg.)

The next dream was no less economical. An entirely unknown couple had motored me to their house in the country for a Saturday-to-Monday visit, and after luncheon on the Sunday my host told me, quite out of the blue, that he disapproved of my attentions to his wife, and I must leave the house at once. In some chagrin I went to my bedroom, and as I disconsolately packed my suitcase in came the lady, weeping. 'I can't tell you,' she said, 'how sorry I am that this has happened, and it's too bad that you should have to go back by train; however, I'll send you a cheque for your

ticket *and your tea.*' Observe that the Brownies had told me nothing about my hosts, not even their names, and provided me with no feelings of any kind towards either of them: they merely wanted to get me into the ignominious plight of a foiled Lothario having his tea paid for by his impossible She.

Another night I found myself dreaming of Jenny Lind's husband Otto Goldschmidt, to whom the Brownies had for their own purposes given an enormous and comical nose. Jenny Lind said slyly that she had married him for it, and as I woke up he was saying: 'J'ai suivi mon nez, et il m'a mené dans le Paradis.' Do not these words give a charming account of those fortunate persons who live happily and aright by instinct?

Not so long ago I dreamt I was reading Harold Nicolson's book *Small Talk*, and looking at the back found the title given as *The Oarist*. 'What a horrible word,' I thought; 'and the book has nothing whatever to do with rowing—what can Harold have been thinking of?' When I woke up, I recollected the Greek word *Oaristus*, explained by Liddell and Scott as 'familiar converse, fond discourse.' This has an interesting analogy with a dream related by Frederic Myers, in which the dreamer, entering a *Bouillon-Duval* restaurant in Paris, noticed the words VERBASCUM THAPSUS over the door. Being a botanist, he remembered that this was the scientific name of the Great Mullein, the French for which is *Bouillon*.

The next two are merely plays upon words, which seem to me ingenious. Somebody asked me to suggest an excuse for refusing a dull duty-dinner, and I advised him to try protective mimicry. 'How do you mean?' 'Pretend you're giving a dinner yourself on the same evening.'

In the other, I made an extremely bad joke to Dick Sheepshanks, the brilliant young Reuter correspondent who

lost his life in Spain. 'Now Eddie,' said Dick reprovingly, 'that's not a *practical* joke. Next time you think of making a joke, I advise you to write it down on paper first. Then you'll be able to judge if it's practical or not.'

I was not actually sleeping, but dozing off, when I found myself saying in the second stanza of the *Grecian Urn*:

'Earned increments are sweet, but those unearned  
Are sweeter,'

instead of 'Heard melodies . . .' (I gave this to Winston Churchill for a statement which he sent to the newspapers about one of his Budgets). Another wise saw was vouchsafed me in the same manner:

'If second thoughts are good, third thoughts are better:  
Post not until next day your angry letter.'

The Brownies as a class have not been well brought up, and mine can never have been taught the elementary Nursery rule which I mentioned in my preface against making jokes about names; for when they heard that Miss Helen Waddell was versifying some of Arthur Waley's translations from the Chinese, the graceless creatures whispered to my 'reflective midriff':

'Oh, Waley Waley up the bank,  
And Waddell, Waddell down the brae.'

I have never been one to stand any nonsense from the Night Hag, and have always managed, just as the panic mood was setting in, either to dodge it, or turn it to favour and to prettiness, or else to wrench myself awake.\* Threatened by a sinister and sturdy beggar, I give him a push and take to my heels; but no hot breath is on my neck,

\* It is perhaps worth noticing that I have never knowingly had a dream which I could trace to my misadventure in Corsica (related in Chapter XII).

no footsteps thud behind me: I stop and look round: I am alone. Called to sudden action, and frantically hunting for a shoe, I find that I had it on all the time. I am in company with nothing on, but nobody seems to notice it; so I go upstairs and dress.

I was about to cross the Channel with Edward Horner and his sister, and we had just settled comfortably down on the steamer, when I observed a curious appearance in the deck: it was disintegrating into a network of serpents, and in another moment would be writhing like Medusa's head under our feet. No such Gorgonian horror for me on a holiday! 'I don't think this is a very nice ship,' I said, 'let's see if there's another'; and gathering up our belongings we remounted the gangplank. Sure enough, there was a perfectly good ship in the next berth, also bound for Calais, and in its 'snakeless meadow' we installed ourselves. Another time, I was visiting the belfry of a country church when suddenly the entire floor gave way beneath me and disappeared, leaving me only just time to seize hold of some projection from the wall. Clinging like a bluebottle, I saw far below me the hard pavement of the chancel. My strength was failing, and in another moment I should be dashed to pieces. 'This is no good,' I said to myself, 'you'd better wake up'; and I did.

Christopher Hassall's dream-poem *Out of my window I looked ten* (published with *Devil's Dyke*), which turns to tragic uses the pattern of the Ten Little Nigger-boys, deserves to be a classic of 'Sleep and Poetry.' I introduced him to J. B. Priestley at a Heinemanns evening party, and that night he dreamt that *he* introduced *me* to Priestley as 'the translator of the Fables of Lynn Fontanne.'

I have kept the crowning glory of my dreams to the last. I firmly believe it to be a snatch of authentic poetry, and it is assuredly much better than anything I ever wrote with



my eyes open—just as Arthur Benson dreamt the first two stanzas of his best poem, *The Phoenix* (though happily the inspiration survived his awakening, and he succeeded in completing it with a third on the same level). I live in fear of coming across my little bit in some actual play, but if the Brownies stole it they have so far not been found out. I was watching an Elizabethan tragedy, in which the situation was much the same as in Ford's *Broken Heart*. A great Princess, in the centre of the stage, was receiving messenger after messenger of disaster with complete composure; and in a corner by the footlights two courtiers were discussing her demeanour. One of them condemned her callousness, and the other answered:

‘Who knows  
What tears behind those arid-seeming eyes  
Stand pricking at the lids?’

I feel sure Charles Lamb would have put it into his *Specimens*!

## CHAPTER XVIII

### PRIVATE SECRETARY III

War Office—Colleagues—Sir Henry Wilson—The Secretary of State's Post-bag—Colonial Office again—Duke of Devonshire—J. H. Thomas—South African Journey—Treasury—Sir James Grigg—Dominions Office—Malcolm MacDonald—Retirement—K.C.V.O.—My Dinner—Epilogue

DIRECTLY the War was over, I followed Winston Churchill to the War Office, where my principal colleague was the genial Herbert Creedy. He and I had a Number in common: that of the Ministers whom he had served in one Office, and of the Offices in which I had served one Minister. Another room-mate was Jack Wodehouse, who except for Winston was my first Polo friend; but here for once was a new influence which I found myself strong enough to resist. At that time Winston still played, and to preserve his engagement-sheet from even the appearance of frivolity and self-indulgence we availed ourselves of the term 'Collective Equitation', by which we learnt that Polo was officially designated in the French Army.

Among the soldiers, the most striking figure was Sir Henry Wilson. Mme de Sévigné speaks of *le privilège qu'ont les hommes d'être laids*, and he was one of those to whom it is a privilege; for his ugly face on top of his towering loosely-jointed frame was an added charm to the good humour that flickered round his fantastic lashing sarcasms, and his trenchant voice that could suddenly go dreamy. He was talking one day of the incalculable chances of life. 'When I was a little boy in Ireland,' he said, 'who could tell what would become of me? One way (*crescendo*) Field-Marshal—

Privy Councillor—G.C.B.—all the rest of it: the other way (*diminuendo*) just a little bit of bog-cotton.'

The first business to be dealt with was Demobilization, which gave rise to many hard cases—few harder than this one:

'To the Secretary of State for War.

'12 June, 1919.

'DEAR SIR,—

'I am appealing to you, because the position seems hopeless.

'We have a man, Sergeant, 12911, Damerell by name, Army Pay Office, Blackheath, for whom we have held his birth open for 2 years and over. We were told that if we were patient we should regain his services in June. We have carried on till now, June arrives, but we find that they will not release him because he has not got 3 wound-stripes or more, which is practically an impossible thing to obtain, whilst he is in the Army Pay Office at Blackheath, all the time.

'We ask your pardon for bringing this matter to your notice, our only excuse being dire necessity.

'We beg to remain,

'Yours respectfully,

'THE BRITANNIA CLOTHING CO. LIMITED.'

Here are two more samples of the Secretary of State's post-bag:

'October 9, 1919.

'DEAR SIR,—

'Some of us hoped to hear that yourself and Mr. A. Chamberlain had been made Barons; but it seems not.

'There has also been a rumour that the English nation desired to elect a new ruler, a lady, related on her father's side to Queen Anne Boleyn, mother of Queen Elizabeth; and on her mother's to Queen Jane Seymour, mother of King Edward VI. But nothing of it is known

about here. She supports the Protestant Constitution, and is not in favour of the separation of Ireland from England; would prefer the two countries to be proclaimed united, on equal terms. A mild, peaceable prince, I understood.

‘Your sincere  
‘G.’

‘This note is private.

‘PS.—Most of us would be thankful to receive our letters and parcels safely, by the post.’

‘To Winston Churchill.  
‘Mount Vernon, New York.  
‘Oct. 16, 1921.

‘MY DEAR SIR AND YOUR PEOPLE,—

‘Don’t you know that it is an act of adultery to kill, eat, or slay, or drive cattle?

‘Don’t you know that the cattle want to live the same as you do?

‘C. ANTON B. BIRNELL.’

Our next move was in 1921, back to our primeval Colonial Office, where Winston was to cope with the complicated problems of the Middle East. Hubert Young, who was then one of the lights of the Department concerned, came over to the War Office to put him wise, and Winston began the conversation by saying that he had a virgin mind. Over the top came Young with ‘I’m here to ravish it.’ The policies ‘of that rape begotten’, and my Chief’s other exploits of this time, are written in the Books of the Chronicles.

So are the negotiations leading up to the Irish Treaty, of which my liveliest impressions were the grand imperturbable patience and stability of Sir James Craig, and the charm of Michael Collins. Winston, who at the start was instinct with the spirit of ‘not shaking hands with Murder’, was cross with me at first for being thus beguiled; but in daily contact he

came to recognize Collins's quality, and he paid him a fine tribute after his death. I had a painful moment when I first saw Erskine Childers sitting at the council table. We had been great friends at Trinity and later, and I knew him for one of the sweetest natures in the world; but now, when our eyes met, in his there was no recognition.

It was curious and pleasant to find myself at the Colonial Office again after about thirteen years' absence; and it fell out well for me that when a year later Winston was once more reft away, I was in the Office to which I really belonged, and could be quite naturally taken-on by his successor, the Duke of Devonshire, as the live stock on the premises. Otherwise, I can't imagine what would have become of me; for not long before this I had been offered the chance of rejoining the administrative staff in my proper grade, and told that it was then or never. Partly from dog-like fidelity, and partly because I 'liked the life', I had refused to leave Mr. Micawber; and thenceforth, on the analogy of the Baker in *The Hunting of the Snark* who could only bake Bridecake, I was a Private Secretary or nothing.

This is the moment, though I shall be stealing a march on Chronology, for a brief thanksgiving to whatever Gods there be for my four Chiefs. Winston Churchill: the Duke of Devonshire: J. H. Thomas: Malcolm MacDonald—it would be hard to find four men more sharply contrasted, but I was blest in them all. The Duke was evidently a less exciting chief than Winston, and his high qualities were of an order which it would be an impertinence in anyone but an historian to catalogue or to praise. I will only mention two of those which made him charming to work for—his kindness, and his occasional flashes of dry and ironical humour.

The Baldwin Government fell in January 1924, and the Colonial Office went to J. H. Thomas, who kept me on. I had a slight acquaintance with him already, and we made great friends at once. We both rejoiced in a caricature which showed us dressing up to one another, him in 'immaculate'



*Devonshire.*  
THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE

*From a photograph by J. Russell & Sons*



evening clothes, and me in corduroy trousers tied under the knees with string. It was delightful to see him settling down in his startlingly novel position. He knew of course the tradition by which Civil Servants have no politics in their work, and give whole-hearted service to whatever party is in power; but one could feel that he wasn't *quite* sure whether this would hold good when the party was Labour, and that for a day or two he was slightly on the defensive. It wasn't long before this cat's-ice was broken, and entire confidence set in.

He was a capital master and companion. 'Human' is an unscientific term of praise, for we are all human; but everybody knows what it means, and it hits J. H. off to perfection. The one thing I should have dreaded in a Labour chief was 'class-feeling'; and of this, as of snobbishness, he had no trace. In his opinion, the country in which he had risen from errand-boy to Secretary of State was a wonderful country, with a wonderful constitution; and while he wanted everyone to get to the top who had it in him, he had no urge to pull anybody down who was already there. The only thing that made him see red was an abuse of power, or kicking a man when he was down. He was touchingly loyal to old friends and associates, and it was in part this quality which led him to disaster, for he counted on the same loyalty from them. All the time I was with him his courage and spring were unfailing, and this made him a great source of strength to the Prime Minister, who had equal courage but much less resilience, and sometimes had to be fished-up out of the Slough of Despond. It was a privilege to be taken into his family life, which was famous for its perfection; and in Mrs. Thomas he had a wise counsellor and brave self-effacing supporter, with an uncommon dignity all her own.

His speaking was quite unlike anyone else's. Hardly a sentence worked out, and an accurate report would have been unintelligible, but his delivery left no doubt of his



meaning. *Le style, c'était l'homme*, as can so seldom be said nowadays. His usual technique in an after-dinner speech was to begin by seizing on something that had fallen from a previous speaker, turn it to ridicule, and proceed to a series of outrageous insults which set everyone, including the victim, in a roar; and then, without any transition, to rise from this mood and say quite simply and seriously, often with moving eloquence, what he really felt and meant about the subject in hand.

His intentional humour was original and usually good, and he was always adding to a grand repertory of stories; but he had also several comicalities, of which one couldn't be quite sure if they were intentional or not. His h's, of course, are celebrated, and I think he must have misplaced them with conscious art. John Buchan told me of a reporter who asked him after a meeting what Mr. Thomas could possibly have meant by the 'Haddock Committee', as the subject of his speech hadn't been even remotely connected with fish of any kind; and John was able to tell him that what had been in question was an *ad hoc* committee. He was always getting names wrong, for instance Lord Hugh Cecil became Lanky instead of Linky; and when he told me of the line that Emily and Alexandra had taken in a discussion, I gathered that he was speaking of Lord Amulree and Mr. Alexander. He had, moreover, a special way with household words. '*He* doesn't carry much ice,' he said to me of someone who had attacked him in the House. 'No,' I answered, 'and he doesn't cut many guns either.' Other examples were 'a live broom', 'no fish to grind', and 'the trouser's on the other leg'. It became a diversion of the Private Office to concoct phrases on these lines, such as 'the nigger in the ointment', and I had a tiny triumph when I thought of 'That bitches my pitch', and he actually brought it out a week later. ('I buttered him on the back' would have suited him very well, but this was the creation of an elderly Duchess.)

He once went down to speak for Lord Colum Crichton-

Stuart in the Northwich Division, and as he never wrote out his speeches beforehand, it was settled that he should travel with a representative of the Press Association and tell him what he was going to say. When it was all over, I dictated a letter of thanks to Lord Colum for the arrangements he had made, all of which had worked perfectly, except that 'the press-man whom Mr. Thomas had meant to indoctrinate on the journey' had for some reason failed to turn up. The shorthand-writer took her notes away, and a minute later came back in perplexity. 'What did you say Mr. Thomas wanted to do to that man?' she asked, 'intoxicate him, or inoculate him?'

After six months at the Colonial Office we set out on the visit to South Africa which I have already mentioned. The original plan was for a tour of about eight months, but we hadn't been there a fortnight when J. H. and Lord Hailsham (then Sir Douglas Hogg) had to go back to London for a special session of Parliament to deal with the Irish Boundary. This was a dreadful disappointment—the rest of the party were proceeding at their leisure to the Victoria Falls, and we started for home on the very day when all the wild flowers came out. However, I had seen 'cities of men and manners'—Cape Town, Durban, Bloemfontein and Johannesburg, to say nothing of Basutoland and Zululand, which was the best of all; and half a loaf, as J. H. might have said, was better than a burnt stick. On both the voyages there were fancy-dress balls, at one of which Lord Hailsham appeared as a baby, and at the other as a granny. Both impersonations were faultless.

We came back on September 29th to find the Government in great difficulties, which we naturally thought might have been avoided if J. H. had been on the spot. Exactly a month later they were beaten in the General Election, and I was separated from him for five years.

Six days after this, as I was questioning Fate, I got a

ring on the telephone: it was Winston, announcing himself as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and summoning me to rejoin him. I will pass lightly over my four and a half years at the Treasury, to which I was quite unsuited. I have already compared myself to the Baker in *The Hunting of the Shark*, and now I must go for an analogy to the Beaver, which 'in earlier years had taken no pains with its sums.' None of the fair Sciences had smiled very broadly on my lowly birth, that of Finance least of all; and my great-grandfather Perceval might just as well never have been Chancellor, or 'successfully converted the three-per-cent stock, as he did with general approval, into terminable annuities' (*D.N.B.*).

My principal colleague was P. J. Grigg (now presiding as Sir James over the finances of India), whose friendship is one of those I am most proud of, because it was the most difficult to win; for he weighed people first of all in the official balance, by which he rightly found me wanting, and moreover he was by nature suspicious of strangers. When we knew each other well, we had a discussion of our respective attitudes towards our fellow-creatures, and concluded that since what he hated most was being duped, his fear was of judging people more favourably than they deserved, whereas I didn't so much mind being taken in, and therefore was most afraid of not doing them justice. I thought that while his principle was the more distinguished, mine was more conducive to what Talleyrand called *la douceur de vivre*.

1928 was the year, and August 28th the day, of my Corsican misadventure related in Chapter XII. About a fortnight later I came home, and had a most enjoyable six weeks' convalescence, divided between Ivor Novello's Redroofs, Winston Churchill's Chartwell, and London. Then came two months of 'taking it easy' at the Treasury, and on the last day of the year I set out to finish the good

work with the Lloyds in Cairo, having sold my beautiful Ashdene Spenser to pay for my ticket. This enchanting visit revived, though only for the moment, my old love of 'abroad', which till the War had been one of my strongest passions, but had since unaccountably died away; and I spent the days in fervent sight-seeing, mostly with Mrs. George Keppel, who was a splendid companion, full of knowledge and zeal. There was one awe-striking moment. We were all drinking our coffee in the Residency garden after luncheon, when a Janizary in scarlet and gold advanced across the lawn and uttered the impressive words 'Jerusalem wants Mr. Marsh.' I felt like Habakkuk at least; but it was only a telephone invitation from my old friend John Chancellor, who was then Governor of the Sacred City, to look in on him on my way home, which was, alas, impossible. Another agreeable memory is a game of poker, with a sixpenny limit, in which the Aga Khan shared a hand with Lady Letty Benson, and was just as much thrilled by the ups-and-downs of the play as if thousands had been at stake. I returned to London with the new lease of life which I always seem to get after a really serious illness.

The following June brought the fall of the Government, and with it my third and final parting from Winston. His last official kindness was to suggest to J. H., who was to be Lord Privy Seal and Minister of Unemployment, that he should take me back, which he did. I was again rather at sea with the new work, and it was a relief to return once more, exactly a year later, and feeling, as I find from my diary, 'like the world's worst halfpenny', to the Dominions Office (for by now the old Colonial Office had been bisected). Here I was alone in my glory as Principal Private Secretary; but I found a delightful junior colleague in Cecil Syers, who has since been promoted to the service of the Prime Minister.

The crisis of 1931 called forth all J. H.'s finest qualities.

How serious it was, came home to me when I met one of the ablest members of the Cabinet Secretariat in Downing Street after a Cabinet meeting, and he said as he hurried past me: 'It's sad to see a great country going down the drain.' That it escaped this fate was in large measure due to my Chief. He stood to lose more than anybody, for when he took his stand with the Prime Minister and Mr. Snowden, not only did he imperil his place in the Government and his seat at Derby, but he broke at once and for ever with the Railwaymen's Union, to which he had given his life; and for all he knew he was condemning himself to poverty and obscurity as well as to the abhorrence of nearly all his old friends and allies. He counted the cost, and made up his mind where his duty lay; and from that moment, though I, who saw him every day, could see how much he suffered, he never looked to right or left, but went straight forward.

On the painful subject of his resignation five years later, I will say no more than that I would put my hand in the fire on it that he had done nothing he knew or felt to be wrong. By that time we were no longer together, for after the General Election in November 1935 he crossed the building to the Colonial Office, and there were staff complications which prevented my following him; so I had been left behind to take service with the last of my Chiefs. Of the others, from whose gentle sway I have been so long released, I have been able to write in perspective and without excessive awe; but Malcolm MacDonald was till too lately invested with the sacrosanctity of a Boss for me to take any liberties with him, and I must content myself with a general but deep-felt tribute of admiration and personal affection.

As I would rather be thought vainglorious than ungrateful, I must be allowed to dwell for a little on the kindness that was shown me on my retirement, which was fixed for February 13th, 1937. Till a few days before, I hadn't supposed that any fuss would be made about it, and had



MALCOLM MACDONALD

*From a photograph by Fayer,  
66 Grosvenor Street, London, W.1*



expected to fade inconspicuously away after a round of hand-shaking with anybody who might be at the Office on a Saturday morning; but it turned out very differently. On the Friday afternoon the whole Department assembled in the Secretary of State's room, and in a speech which even I am not quite vain enough to print Malcolm raised me to the skies, and presented me with an exquisite and convenient inkstand of Sheffield plate, inscribed *To Eddie, from his friends in the Dominions Office.*

The day before, I had received a still greater honour, but I had also perpetrated the worst *gaffe* of my whole official life—I think I can safely say that nothing in my career became me so ill as the leaving of it. In the previous week, Lord Wigram had sent for me to Buckingham Palace and told me that the King proposed to invest me in private audience with the K.C.V.O. Till that moment, I had never had the smallest wish for rank or title. Winston, with a natural desire to have everything handsome about him, had wanted at one time to get me submitted for the K.C.M.G.; but I knew I hadn't deserved it, and as the numbers of the Order are strictly limited I should only have been taking it out of the mouth of some colleague whose work had been much more arduous than mine, who would care much more about the distinction, and would probably have a wife to enjoy being 'my Lady'; so I had demurred to the suggestion, rather to the disgust of Winston, who told me I oughtn't to refuse to wear the livery of my class. But the K.C.V.O. was a different matter. It was a personal mark of the Sovereign's favour; I shouldn't be standing in the way of anybody I knew; and it was suddenly borne in upon me that it would after all be very pleasant to leave the Service with some tangible support for the view that I had not been an altogether unprofitable Servant. Moreover, the separate investiture was a much higher compliment than inclusion in a List.

Now for the horror. When I was at the Palace, the



following Friday had been suggested for the ceremony, the time to be fixed later. When the letter came, I must suppose that 'dim mine eyes and dizzy swum in darkness'; for I noticed only the hour, and not that the day had been changed to Thursday. The consequence was that at 12.15 on the Thursday Tommy Lascelles rang the Dominions Office up to ask what on earth had become of me—the King had expected me at 12 o'clock. I won't attempt to estimate the number of inches that my flesh crept, or the degrees of hot and cold that raced through my veins. Was it possible I could be forgiven? What would have happened if I had behaved so to Henry VIII or Louis XIV? Luckily these are milder times, and it was a comfort that Tommy was an old friend. I was given a second chance, for that same afternoon. The King received me with all grace and graciousness, without allusion to my *lèse-majesté*; and my cup was crowned by a chance meeting with the Queen as I walked away down a corridor.

There were two more great occasions. Malcolm MacDonald gave me a dinner at Brooks's at which eight of my former political chiefs and colleagues were present, and Winston, J. H., and Malcolm himself made speeches; and most wonderful of all, there was a positive Banquet at the May Fair Hotel, given me by the followers of the three Muses whose acolyte I had mainly been, Literature, Painting, and the Drama. This honour I owed entirely to William Rothenstein, who conceived the scheme and carried it through in face of considerable opposition from me; for I thought it was very doubtful if anybody would come except perhaps a rabblement of quidnuncs, and in any case I should have to make my first speech. But Will was resolute; he brushed all my doubts aside, put himself at the head of a committee composed of Walter de la Mare, Siegfried Sassoon and Edmund Blunden, and with the help of Christopher Hassall whom he enlisted as secretary, set about 'compelling them to come in.'

When I found there was to be no escape, there was nothing for it but to prepare my oration. The matter was my first difficulty, for (to quote the best sentence from what in the end I spoke) 'to talk about myself would be egotistical: to talk about anything else would be irrelevant.' And then there was the problem of delivery. George Wyndham had told me that after his maiden speech in the House Mr. Chamberlain had congratulated him on its style and substance, but criticized his gestures. 'I myself,' he had said, 'when I was a beginner, used to rehearse all my speeches in front of a full-length looking-glass.' I possessed no such aid to deportment, but for a week before the event I practised my remarks at every spare moment; and on the night I was word-perfect and (I was told) audible.

The date was March 17th. Winston, in his capacity as author, took the chair, and there were about 140 guests, of whom I will only say that their names would have made a very respectable section of the various *Who's Who's* of the Arts. Four toasts were given: 'Eddie and Literature', proposed by the Poet Laureate; 'Eddie and Painting', by Will Rothenstein; 'Eddie and the Theatre', by James Agate; and lastly 'Eddie Himself', by Winston Churchill. I carried off two drawings by Augustus John and a valuable collection of autographs, and I suppose I went to bed that night the happiest man in England.

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A few months ago I went to my dentist for the annual overhaul, and for the first time he seemed to be taking a serious view. 'I suppose I'm breaking up,' I said, expecting him to brush the suggestion aside; instead of which he answered: 'Yes, but don't let it weigh on you.' This excellent piece of advice happened to embody a principle by which I have always been governed; and it gives me a cue for a little epilogue which I hope will not seem complacent.

Happiness is nowadays under a cloud. I suspect that the

mass of mankind still regard it as a worthy object of Pursuit; but by the leaders of thought it is discredited. This earth, they say, is not a place in which a rational person can be happy; and if by miracle an individual could manage it on his own account, his satisfaction must surely be drenched, unless he be a monster of egotism, in his consciousness of the general agony. This point of view is certainly superior to my Victorian nurse's smug exhortation to 'Think of all the poor children who don't even have tapioca pudding'; but while Divine Despair, in a Lucretius or a Leopardi, is an indispensable note in the complicated harmony of the world, it doesn't suit everybody, and I feel sure that ordinary people do better with Sweet Content. It seems to me therefore to be in these days almost a duty for anyone who has enjoyed his life to own it without shame or scruple.

It is no doubt, as the saying goes, 'easy for me to talk,' for both in what I have had and in what I have lacked I have been singularly sheltered from the ills that flesh is heir to. Good health (digestion, circulation, and sleep); a middle station; enough money to live upon in comfort and security with a modicum of extras, but never enough to be a burden: a tendency to take rather more interest in other people than in myself; the opportunity to choose my friends; no Ambition with a big A; and no vulnerable spot in wife or children—these (though perhaps I ought to reckon the last as a deprivation outweighing all the rest) have been my advantages; and except in the War, when no one was exempt from misery, I have been unvisited by major reverses or disasters. Mindful of Solon's counsel to call no man fortunate till he is dead, I will confine myself to saying that if I died to-morrow I should have had a happy life.

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*That will do extremely well, child. You have delighted us long enough.*

MR. BENNET.

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